United Nations A/51/PV.33

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

33rd plenary meeting

Monday, 14 October 1996, 10 a.m. (closed)
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 17

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of twenty members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/269)

The President: In accordance with General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

The Assembly has before it document A/51/269, which contains the nominations by the Economic and Social Council to fill the vacancies in the Committee that will occur as a result of the expiration on 31 December 1996 of the terms of office of Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Comoros, the Congo, Cuba, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Those States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, after 1 January 1997, the following States will still be members of the Committee: the Bahamas, Benin, China, Egypt, France, Ghana, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Togo, the United States of America, Uruguay and Zaire.

Therefore, those 14 States are not eligible in this election.

The following States have been nominated by the Economic and Social Council: four African States for four vacancies — Cameroon, Congo, Nigeria, Zimbabwe; four Asian States for four vacancies — Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Thailand; four Eastern European States for three vacancies — Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Ukraine; four Latin American and Caribbean States for four vacancies — Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago; four Western European and other States for five vacancies — Austria, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Verweij (Netherlands): I have to inform the Assembly formally that my Government has decided to withdraw the Netherlands candidature for the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

The President: The number of States nominated from among the African States, the Asian States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States is equal to or does not exceed the number of seats to be filled in each of those regions.

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In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections shall be held by secret ballot. However, in accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the Assembly may, in elections to subsidiary organs, dispense with secret balloting when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

Taking into account the statement just made by the representative of the Netherlands, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to declare those States nominated by the Economic and Social Council from among the African States, the Asian States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States — Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, the Congo, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe — elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997?

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

With regard to the three seats to be filled from among the Eastern European States, the number of candidates nominated exceeds the number of vacancies allocated to this region. Therefore, the Assembly will now proceed to a vote by secret ballot to elect three members from the Eastern European States.

In accordance with the rules of procedure, the required number of candidates that receives the largest number of votes and not less than the majority will be declared elected.

In case of a tie vote for the last seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: Ballot papers for the Eastern European States will now be distributed.

The voting process has begun.

Only the following four States nominated by the Economic and Social Council are eligible: Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. I should like to stress that only the names of three of those States should be written on the ballot paper.

I request representatives to use only the ballot papers that are being distributed and to write the names of the three States for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers containing more than three names will be declared invalid. Names of ineligible States appearing on a ballot paper shall not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Miss Montaño-Duran (Bolivia), Miss Miller (Malta) and Mr. Seaton (South Africa) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Number of ballot papers:	160
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	160
Abstentions:	0
Number of Members voting:	160
Required majority:	81
Number of votes obtained:	
Poland	131
Romania	127
Ukraine	125
Bulgaria	89

The following States, having obtained the required majority and the largest number of votes, were elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997: Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

The President: I congratulate the States that have just been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in the election.

The following 18 States have thus been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 1997: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, Congo, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Zimbabwe.

Regarding the two remaining vacancies from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on them upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of two Member States from that region.

I therefore propose that the Assembly keep this sub-item on the agenda of the fifty-first session. May I take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 98

Operational activities for development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/256)

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children, which has been issued as document A/51/256.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: The World Summit for Children was held six years ago in this building. Six member States — Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden — convened that important meeting, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) serving as secretariat. Seventy-one Heads of State or Government and 88 ministerial representatives participated, making it the largest gathering of world leaders held up until then. It was the first truly global summit conference in history, inaugurating the series of major international development conferences of the 1990s and our collective assault on poverty.

At the World Summit for Children, the high expectations of the international community immediately following the end of the cold war were translated into commitments to children. The participants pledged to achieve seven major goals and 20 supporting goals relating to the survival, health, nutrition, education and protection of children by the year 2000. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/217 of 21 December 1990, urged the international community to work together to achieve them.

What can we say six years later? Are the promises made to children in 1990 being kept? How have the world's children fared?

The findings in the report, contained in document A/51/256, on the progress that has been made since the World Summit for Children are on the whole a cause for celebration — and we did just that two weeks ago in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on the sixth anniversary of the Summit, with the participation of children, the President of the General Assembly, representatives of the initiating countries, the Executive Director of UNICEF and others. It is not often that we are able to report global breakthroughs in the field of development, so we are particularly encouraged that we now can point to considerable and widespread progress for children, who are our collective future.

Although there is considerable variation across countries and regions, information we have from 90 countries suggests an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children in most countries. The greatest progress has been in the control of preventable diseases. Immunization continues to reach approximately 80 per cent of all children before their first birthday, now saving 3 million young children every year. Polio has been eradicated from large parts of the world and, with continued effort, this scourge should go the way of smallpox by the year 2000. Major progress has been made towards the elimination of neonatal tetanus. Guinea worm disease, which sapped the energies of millions of people only five years ago, is now on the verge of elimination, having declined by 97 per cent. There has been dramatic improvement in home management of diarrhoea, the second leading cause of child deaths. The use of oral rehydration therapy has doubled over the past five years and is now saving the lives of some 1 million children every year. Some 1.5 billion more people are consuming iodized salt today than in 1990, preventing the largest single cause of preventable mental retardation in children. Vitamin A supplementation and fortification to prevent blindness and immune-system damage to young children is up in many countries. Access to safe water has improved considerably. Some 82 per cent of all primary-school-age children are now enrolled.

These would be formidable achievements in any circumstances, but the fact that so much progress has been made in a period of unprecedented population growth, proliferating conflicts, widening gaps between rich and poor and cutbacks in government budgets and development assistance attests to the increased importance of children on the international agenda. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategies and low-cost interventions being used to improve children's lives.

Member States should feel encouraged by this performance. I am proud that the United Nations — whose work in development often goes underreported and unrecognized — has been able to make such an important contribution. And I want to take this opportunity to recognize and commend the leadership role that UNICEF has played in this United Nations success story. UNICEF will continue to play an indispensable role in the future.

The children who spoke at the Summit commemoration two weeks ago warned us, however, against self-satisfaction. They spoke with deep emotion on behalf of their sisters and brothers throughout the world, who are still being bypassed by progress. And the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Bellamy, reminded us that progress made to date must be sustained and that special efforts will be needed to accelerate progress in areas where results have been disappointing to date.

Child mortality, while declining, is still being reduced too slowly to reach the year 2000 goal. New estimates show that maternal mortality is a bigger problem than was previously thought. There has been little or no improvement in child malnutrition. The quality of basic education leaves much to be desired, resulting in high drop-out rates, particularly for girls. Safe drinking-water supply has not kept pace with population growth, especially in cities, and progress in providing adequate sanitation has lagged even more. Millions of children continue to lose their childhoods on battlefields and streets, in prostitution and sweatshops.

In presenting this report to the General Assembly, therefore, I want to stress the need to reaffirm the commitments made to children in 1990. The progress I have outlined today must generate greater momentum. We must redouble our efforts to achieve the year 2000 goals, adjusting them where necessary and tailoring the strategies used to achieve them to the realities of each country. Civil societies will have to play a greater role, along with Governments at all levels, if the goals are to be met. Economic and social empowerment of the poor is critically important. Increased investment in basic social services for all, while necessary, will not be sufficient to sustain reductions in poverty. Economic policies aimed at more equal distribution of land, credit and income are also essential. We must increasingly use the Convention on the Rights of the Child — now nearly universal — as a social tool to reach the unreached and to meet the needs and respect the rights of the most disadvantaged, the most vulnerable and the children of minorities suffering under discrimination. Improving the status, well-being and opportunities of girls and women is particularly important.

Follow-up to the World Summit for Children and the other global conferences of this decade needs to be pursued in an integrated fashion, with full United Nations system coordination on the ground. A troubling trend has brought development assistance to its lowest level in a quarter century must be reversed.

The report before the Assembly today tells us what works in development. It tells us that international cooperation is getting measurable results. It tells us that summits and global conferences can make a real difference. It tells us that the twenty-first century can be brighter if we have the political will to put children first. It tells us that investing in children and women is the path to sustainable development.

Children are a prominent feature of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In addition to addressing this report in plenary and in the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, members will be discussing the full range of children's rights in the Third Committee and will soon have before them the important report on the impact of armed conflict on children, prepared under the leadership of Mrs. Machel.

Our deliberations here over the coming months can help maintain and accelerate the pace of progress for the world's children. It is my hope that an end-of-decade review will be held in the year 2000 and its results presented to the General Assembly to advance global cooperation on behalf of the world's children into the next century.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/INF/51/3/Rev.1, which contains the revised programme of work of the General Assembly covering the remainder of October and the beginning of November, and which is now available to delegations.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.34

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

34th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 15 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail .... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 13

Report of the International Court of Justice (A/51/4)

The President: This morning the Assembly will first turn to the report of the International Court of Justice now before the Assembly (A/51/4) covering the period from 1 August 1995 to 31 July 1996.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the International Court of Justice?

It was so decided.

The President: I call upon Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, President of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Bedjaoui (President of the International Court of Justice) *(interpretation from French)*: It is again a pleasure and an honour for me to have the opportunity to address the General Assembly on behalf of the International Court of Justice. I cannot reiterate often enough the importance, in my view, of this direct and truly privileged contact between the Court I represent and the General Assembly, and I am most pleased as well that this has become a regular event. The independence and equanimity which must in all circumstances govern the work of the judiciary, presuppose, of course, that the court maintain a certain distance between itself and the upheavals of the society in whose service it works. But the profoundly social nature of that function at the same time implies that a court must constantly be alert to the problems of that society, and remain in contact with those who are subject to its jurisdiction. I therefore wish to express my sincere thanks to the Assembly — which is not only the major plenary organ of our Organization, but also the cradle of international democracy — for having again this year been willing to set aside a little of its precious time for the President of a Court which is open to all the States of the world and which exists to deal with all the legal questions those States may wish to submit to it.

I am all the more aware of the privilege I have in addressing this body today, in that it has elected to the presidency of the Assembly an illustrious individual, His Excellency Tan Sri Razali Ismail, to whom I extend my warmest congratulations. Let me tell you, Sir, what great hopes your election raises for the international community, which is honoured to welcome you to this eminent post. Your brilliant diplomatic career has enabled you to become acquainted with many of the peoples of the world, who are now placing a very special trust in you, because they know that you understand all their diverse aspirations. The noble struggle in which you have engaged over the years for the promotion of human rights, the development of peoples and respect for the global environment compels our admiration. As a citizen of Malaysia, you are also a symbol of a nation which has achieved an exemplary blend of rich, age-old traditions and a modernism as courageous as it is effective in the promotion of economic renewal and social well-being. The International Court of Justice is especially delighted

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by your election since you recently did it the honour of testifying, most masterfully, before it regarding the grave concerns of your people — of so many peoples — about the threat and the use of nuclear weapons. I am convinced that, with the ideals which have always guided your actions, and with your particular talents and experience, you will successfully fulfil the exalted mission which the international community has this year entrusted to you. I wish you every success in this difficult enterprise.

In 1994, I shared with your Assembly some reflections on the role of the International Court of Justice in the general system for the maintenance of peace established by the Charter. Last year — the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and thus a year of stock-taking — I followed up on those reflections by attempting to sketch the future of the Court, taking account of its various achievements. I should now like to complete this triptych with some considerations on the difficulties encountered by the Court in the performance of its truly unique mission in the service of peace. The wealth of its achievements throughout the past half-century and the very evident revival of interest shown in it in recent years should not cause us to lose sight of the constraints under which it operates. A proper perception of those constraints seems to me essential to a solid understanding of the work of the Court and thus to the strengthening of that work.

The International Court of Justice is a component, as members are aware, not only of the machinery created by the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes, but also of the general system for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Court is the principal judicial organ of the Organization, and, as such, its responsibilities are considerable. While it does not bear exclusive responsibility for the peaceful settlement of legal disputes, it does in a way bear the principal responsibility. For successfully carrying out the tasks thus incumbent upon it, it has at its disposal two instruments: the contentious procedure, at the end of which the Court settles the dispute submitted to it by handing down a judgment that is binding on the parties; and the advisory procedure, at the end of which the Court may respond, by rendering an advisory opinion, to a legal question put to it by an organization authorized to do so. The contentious procedure would seem to be the pre-eminent peacemaking instrument available to the Court. I have already had occasion to stress the advantages for this purpose of the advisory procedure. Apart from the fact that it can be an effective instrument of preventive diplomacy, the advisory procedure may make a substantial contribution to the solution of a dispute that already exists. It can moreover provide the Court with an opportunity to deal with some of the major questions under discussion by the international community. There is scarcely any need for me to refer at this juncture to the momentous issues which, both from the standpoint of the development of the law and from that of world peace, are at stake in advisory proceedings such as those instituted by this Assembly with respect to the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.

The International Court of Justice is endowed with both a privileged institutional status and procedural instruments whose potential is frequently underestimated. Nevertheless, its action in the service of peace faces certain limitations over which it has scant control. Some of them are structural, deriving from the very essence of the function of courts and also from the essence of contemporary society in the service of which international courts work. The other limits are circumstantial and relate, *inter alia*, to the material resources made available to the court. While the former limitations are constant, being structural, and in principle could be removed only at the cost of a distortion of the judicial function or a profound transformation of the political environment in which it is performed, the latter are reversible, but have the drawback of being extremely unpredictable.

Let us first consider the structural limitations. The function of a court might be said to be to restore peace by applying the rule of law in relations between those subject to jurisdiction. There is no disputing the pre-eminent role of the rule of law as a factor for harmony and stability in any society. The law is always an instrument and never an end in itself. But it is an indispensable instrument in terms of ordering relations between the various component of society with a view to attaining the objectives sought by that society, given the changing system of values of that society. It is therefore a truism to assert that by endeavouring to achieve respect for the rule of law in relations between its subjects, a court is playing the role of peacemaker which is essential to the promotion of the social good. In this sense, it is not incorrect to say that a court's function is "political", which does not mean — and this must be stressed — that it can be in any way partisan. It is "political" in the sense that the court is one of the protagonists contributing to the building of human society. However fundamental it may be, the action of a court cannot, however, serve as a panacea for the many and varied ills that may afflict a society, for a whole range of reasons.

In the first place, there are many disorders or imbalances which, by their very nature, substantially —

if not totally — elude the grasp of the law, and hence of the courts. Even the most advanced societies cannot be completely "juridicized". The law cannot claim by virtue of its essential instrumental dimension to understand all aspects of reality. In any society, there are tensions, some more diffuse or apparent, chronic or acute than others, which pose a threat to the social order when they have no clearly defined object. Such tensions, which moreover cannot be left unchecked, inherently elude application of the rule of law, which thus appears unsuited to the task of controlling them. As for more clearly characterized disputes, their complexity is frequently such that, even when they have a legal dimension, tackling that dimension by judicial means — useful though this exercise may be — is not enough to settle them, or even to mitigate them.

The peacemaking function of courts thus encounters its first limitation in the inevitable limits on the degree to which the law permeates social relations and on its effectiveness. Admittedly, although the law never exhausts reality, the place it occupies in the range of societies varies enormously. This place depends on the social reality of which the law forms part: in other words, on a given social milieu, with its ethical imperatives and its political, economic, cultural and other factors. The frequency and impact of the crises which in this way escape the benefits of court intervention are themselves determined by the state of that social milieu.

In the international order, the social fabric is less impregnated by law than it is in the domestic order. Because international society is less integrated, legal relations in it are weaker, even cruder. It scarcely needs to be recalled that today this society is still strongly marked by the "horizontalism" stemming from the coexistence of State sovereignties. In the absence of a universal legislative power which, through general channels, would lay down rules corresponding to the reconciled needs of all the actors in international life, the law of individuals continues to be the direct product of its subjects, all of whom, through State voluntarism, retain control of that part of international law whose application to themselves they accept. There is no doubt that this singular situation, in which the creator of the rule of law is also its direct object, is less favourable to the development of a legal system which is "balanced", whether as regards its normative scope or the material content of its rules. It is no secret that the intensity and the object of the "legislative" actions of the subjects of the international legal order are too often still directly dependent both on the power and the interests of each of those subjects, or of the groupings that they form according to various criteria. International law, not yet a law of solidarity, remains simultaneously heterogeneous and fragmentary.

Here, therefore, is a further difficulty and a challenge for an international court, whose work in the service of peace is entirely dependent on the application of that law. However, I would add that, by a kind of paradox, this handicap under which the international judicial function labours at the same time confers upon it a quite specific social role. Indeed, since the subjects of international law are concurrently the creators and the objects of the rules of that law, in the vast majority of cases, it falls to them to interpret and apply those rules themselves. This being so, it seems somewhat unusual to submit legal disputes between them to a third party. When an international court is called upon to settle such disputes, its decision is thereby thrown into even sharper relief. All the actors on the international stage are then affected by the decision rendered, even if that decision is formally binding on the parties alone. This decision is all the more eagerly anticipated and then scrutinized as intervention by such a court remains the exception. This is still true even at a time when recourse to international courts is increasing, as it is for the International Court of Justice at present.

Without seeking to enter into doctrinal disputes regarding the incompleteness or otherwise of international law, I must note that, in the field of application of this law, there are quite remarkable contrasts of normative density. Although international law has shortcomings, or just uncertainties, it is undeniable that the weaknesses of the instrument are also inevitably the weaknesses of whoever is called upon to have recourse to it, even if they may also contribute to the importance of its role. I would add that the grey areas of the law of individuals may affect fields that are particularly sensitive for the peace and the future of the world.

The International Court of Justice experienced at first hand the anguish of these grey areas when at the request of the Assembly it considered the question of the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. While the imperfections of a legal order may make greater flexibility in the interpretation and application of the rule of law by a court acceptable, or even promote such flexibility, this does not mean that a court can take the place of the legislator. Indeed, the International Court of Justice said as much with the utmost clarity in paragraph 18 of the advisory opinion it delivered on the question I have just referred to, stating that:

> "The Court ... states the existing law and does not legislate. This is so even if, in stating and applying the law, the Court necessarily has to specify its scope and sometimes note its general trend."

There are many systems of law which make it an obligation for a court to rule even when the law is silent or obscure, but at the same time prohibit it from legislating. By definition, the law cannot provide for every eventuality. Scarcely is it adopted than the courts are faced with a thousand and one problems. The function of the courts consists, precisely, in translating the law into action by imbuing themselves with its spirit, by applying its general precepts to the particular circumstances with wisdom and discernment and, in cases which it has not resolved, by completing the law through so-called doctrinal interpretation. The administration of justice would clearly be impossible if courts were to refrain from ruling whenever the law is obscure or incomplete. What, on the contrary, courts are forbidden to do, because this does not fall within their functions, is to interpret authoritatively, in other words to reply to the essential doubts — or even to a legal vacuum — by creating a new norm. The creative power of courts, as expressed in their jurisprudential function, is in a relation of dependency as regards the various formal sources of law. It has sometimes been said that courts must compensate for the shortcomings of the law but cannot fill the lacunae of the law. When the law itself makes it impossible to reply in whole or in part to a question submitted to a court, the court's duty consists in and is limited to registering that state of affairs, however disappointing this may seem.

By virtue of the very structure of international society, only States, in an elevated and responsible conception of their sovereignty, can remedy such a situation by speeding up the construction of international law. In this respect, the International Court of Justice can but hope for an expansion and an improvement in the legal bases of its function. Pending that development, the Court's task may in many ways appear thankless but this does not mean that it therefore ceases to be useful — far from it.

In order properly to assess the contribution of courts to social peace, it is not enough to take into consideration the potentialities or the limits of the rule of law which it is their task to apply. For indeed there are other characteristic elements of the judicial function which, although elementary, are nonetheless fundamental: Regardless of the legal order in which they operate, courts can act only when requested to do so and, as a rule, they only intervene *a posteriori*.

Courts are always seized of a matter; they never seize themselves of it. In this respect particularly, their function is distinct from that of the executive. Although that is the well-established principle, the ease with which courts may be seized of a matter as well as the effects of the seizure, nevertheless vary appreciably from one legal order to another.

In this respect too, access to courts in highly integrated societies is almost automatic. Not only are courts competent *a priori*, but if the interests of society as such are challenged, society has adequate means at its disposal for initiating corrective measures, by itself seizing the courts of a matter by taking legal action. In the international order, however, there is nothing comparable. Respect for the sovereignty of States is echoed in the cardinal principle of consensualism. No State can be made subject to the verdicts of courts unless it has already agreed to do so. The International Court of Justice cannot be expected, in the manner of the Security Council, to entertain all the disputes likely to pose a threat to international peace and security. The Court can intervene only at the request of and with the consent of the interested parties. However, this structural limitation, which hampers the Court's action, may be partly removed. Progress towards this end is possible. It probably requires a more permissive approach to the Court's jurisdiction, more limited use of preliminary objections by States engaged in proceedings, a less lax conception of State consensualism and, finally, a clearer perception by all States of the advantages they may jointly derive from submitting their disputes to the Court.

Furthermore, whereas in vertical societies, the rulings of courts are not only compulsory but also enforceable, in the international order, the absence of executive power essentially leaves it to the legal subjects themselves to ensure that legal decisions are respected. The Covenant of the League of Nations and then the Charter of the United Nations sought to offset the potentially dangerous effects of this situation in which self-help prevails. In this respect, Article 94 of the Charter contains a number of weaknesses that must be admitted, such as the fact that intervention by the Security Council is subordinated to a request by one of the parties. Also, the Council is given very wide discretionary powers. It may, says the Charter, act if it deems necessary. However, it gives me pleasure to note that, fortunately, the judgments of the International Court of Justice have in the past been scrupulously respected.

The fact nevertheless remains that the formal limits placed on the seizure of the International Court and on the execution of its rulings render its task all the more difficult when it has to act in a crisis situation. This, therefore, further limits its contribution to the maintenance of peace.

A moment ago I referred to another element of the judicial function, which is as characteristic as it is constant. It is the functions of courts to heal rather than to prevent. Contrary to those of the legislator or the executive, the decisions by which courts perform their functions are decisions *a posteriori*. Contentious jurisdiction presupposes the existence of a dispute and, in most legal systems, the party that appears before a court must prove what is commonly termed an "an existing and pending interest". From that standpoint, the function of courts is more to restore than to maintain peace. The way they function is rendered all the more delicate because, as is the case in international society, this function does not form part of a structure that has an executive machinery. In this respect, the wholly unique nature of the advisory proceedings before the International Court of Justice, whose preventive virtues no longer need to be demonstrated, should be stressed once again.

In addition to these constraints which I have termed "structural" because they are inherent in the function of courts or in the present state of international society, there are some others which are by no means necessary. I refer in particular to all those related to the material resources which society places at the disposal of courts to enable them to fulfil their task. What resources are provided is essentially dependent not just on the prevailing economic situation but also on the prevailing political situation. Indeed, the resources allocated to courts vary markedly from one society to another — and even within a given society, they vary from one period to another — depending on the importance of the role courts are recognized to have in each of those societies and on the resources at their command. Unfortunately, the judge is often the poor relation in our societies, and all too often only through crises highlighting the impecuniosity of the judicial apparatus can the parsimony of the budgetary authorities towards it be overcome. But justice can obviously be sound only if it has a minimum of resources with which to operate, and on a permanent basis.

In its report to the General Assembly it is not customary for the International Court of Justice to mention the material difficulties it encounters in performing its duties. For the first time, it has this year been compelled to do so. The gravity of the situation left it with no alternative. In fact, however, there is nothing strange about this, since Article 33 of the Statute of the Court states that

> "The expenses of the Court shall be borne by the United Nations in such a manner as shall be decided by the General Assembly".

It was therefore most certainly the Court's duty to draw the attention of the Assembly to a situation which seriously imperils the very discharge of the Court's duties. It is not appropriate for me, in this forum, to go into this matter in detail. It is considered at some length in chapter IV of the Court's report. Suffice it to say here that the Court voices the fear that the reductions in resources required of it are "beginning to curtail its established levels of judicial service" *(A/51/4, para. 185)* and are engendering "delay ... in discharging its duties" *(ibid., para. 188)*. Among other things, the Court states that

> "The reality is that the funding of the Court falls considerably short of what is required for it to fulfil its functions ...
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> "The costs to the Court of ensuring that a case is fairly and impartially heard may not be sufficiently appreciated ... Yet it has always been recognized that the Court cannot render justice without performing those tasks, and it falls to the United Nations to provide it with the requisite means." *(ibid., paras. 189-190)*

I would like to stress that it is a particular attribute of any responsible institution consciously to question the limits imposed on its actions. Such questioning is all the more essential for an institution which, like the judicial institution, performs a crucial social role. Indeed, all the beneficiaries of its work are entitled to know without any ambiguity what they can and what they cannot expect from it. It was in this resolutely constructive spirit that I wished to share these few comments. Let no one see them as betraying any apathy or any pessimism. Quite the contrary, I cannot conceal my outright satisfaction at being able to observe and to state that, notwithstanding all the constraints under which the organ of which I am President has to labour, its activity during the past year has been fruitful as never before.

During the period from 1 August 1995 to 31 July 1996, the Court rendered no less than five decisions in cases of extreme complexity. Contrary to its usual practice of considering only one case at a time, the Court, in order to bring off this *tour de force*, had constantly to deliberate on an average of three cases simultaneously. In response to the resumption by France of nuclear testing, New Zealand filed a Request for an Examination of the Situation in accordance with Paragraph 63 of the Court's Judgment of 20 December 1974 in the Nuclear Tests (New Zealand v. France) Case. After hearings on whether the Request submitted by New Zealand fell within paragraph 63 of the 1974 Judgment, the Court found, in its Order of 22 September 1995, that it did not. It then held three weeks of hearings in October and November 1995 simultaneously on two well-known requests for advisory opinions, one filed by the World Health Organization on the Legality of the Use by a State of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict, and the other filed by the General Assembly on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.

An unprecedented number of States submitted written statements and took part in the hearings on what may be the most important questions ever put to the Court in advisory proceedings. The two Advisory Opinions, which required consideration of exceptionally difficult problems, were rendered on 8 July 1996. While considering these requests, the Court was also seized of a request for the indication of provisional measures in the case concerning the Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria and issued an Order on that request on 15 March 1996. The Court also held hearings from 29 April to 3 May 1996 on issues of jurisdiction and admissibility raised in the case concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)), and delivered a Judgment on those questions on 11 July 1996.

Finally, since last month the Court has also been engaged in settling the case concerning Oil Platforms destroyed in the Gulf during the Iraq-Iran war, a case between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America.

In conclusion, I should like once again to stress that the place of the law and of courts in international society can only be consolidated, or even expanded, if members of the Assembly as legislators and we as judges together recognize that this process depends on both respect for the task already accomplished — not to say the legal edifice already constructed — and on the meticulous acknowledgment of the new realities of human society. It is absolutely essential that this twofold condition be met if lasting progress is to be ensured in the development of a true community of law at the international level.

In closing my statement, I should like to voice the simple yet fervent hope that the Court may, against all odds, pursue its exalted work with pride and humility. This hope, I am sure, will be met if all the States represented here with such distinction and the Organization that unites us lend the Court their indispensable support.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil) *(interpretation from French)*: After President Bedjaoui's authoritative analysis of the political, sociological and even philosophical dimensions of international law and its application, it is best to be brief. I will aim to be so.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to start by thanking the President of the International Court of Justice for his informative introduction of the report on the Court's activity during the year of its fiftieth anniversary. The annual presentation of the report of the International Court of Justice to the General Assembly provides Member States with a unique opportunity to engage in a debate on the work of a principal organ of the United Nations known for its high professional standards. We avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our appreciation for the Court's important contribution to world peace and reaffirm our continuing support for its endeavours.

The increased caseload of the International Court of Justice in the past few years should be greeted as a sign of lasting relevance and renewed vitality. We would like to be able to interpret such a development as growing evidence of respect for international law and interest in judicial settlement as a means for the pacific resolution of disputes. However, it is perhaps still premature to reach such a conclusion.

The danger of a global conflagration seems to have diminished in our present international environment. But the preservation of peace and security has become a task fraught with new and complex challenges, given the recent emergence of a myriad of extremely violent localized conflicts. In discharging its responsibilities, the Security Council has often been pressed to improvise solutions, and in this process insufficient attention has been given to the tools provided by international law as consubstantiated in the Court's Statute.

All Members of the United Nations are, by virtue of their adherence to the Charter, also parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice. This allows, in particular, for the establishment of a mutually reinforcing relationship between the Security Council and the Court. Whereas for several decades the work of the Security Council was hampered by the politics of bipolarity, the intensification of the Security Council's activity since the end of the cold war would seem to warrant closer cooperation between the organ charged with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and the Organization's principal judicial organ.

The development of a closer relationship between the Court and both the Security Council and the General Assembly is worth encouraging as a way of strengthening the rule of law in international relations and giving full expression to the provisions of the Charter. In promoting such a relationship, it is worth recalling the provisions of Article 96 regarding the possibility, open to both the General Assembly and the Council, to request advisory opinions from the Court on any legal question.

Moreover, it has been suggested that, as the cohesiveness of the international community intensifies, the Court may be called upon to examine questions relating to the jurisdictional boundaries between the different organs of the system. Is it possible to envisage a future when the Court might have powers of judicial review over administrative actions or political decisions taken by another principal organ, or is such an evolution too far-fetched to be contemplated? The fact that this possibility was raised during a previous debate under this agenda item is indicative of the fertile ground open for further exploration, which could bring to fruition new and enhanced forms of integration of the main parts of our institutional system.

A landmark opinion was arrived at by the International Court of Justice as regards, *inter alia*, the existence of a legal obligation to negotiate in good faith measures of nuclear disarmament and bring those negotiations to a conclusion. This Opinion constitutes a new term of reference for the international community in favour of nuclear disarmament and provides the General Assembly with a valuable incentive to pursue its own efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

I would also like to stress the significance of the Court's action to promote harmonious integration in a part of Latin America which was, until recently, ravaged by strife. I am referring to the Judgment issued by the Court in connection with the land, island and maritime frontier between El Salvador and Honduras. The Court's treatment of this question has made an invaluable contribution to the subregion's stability, helping the two countries to liberate their creative energy to face the challenges of social and economic development while consolidating democracy.

Besides issuing advisory opinions and settling contentious cases, the Court has also demonstrated its ability to function as an effective tool of preventive diplomacy and could well acquire an enhanced role in this capacity in the years to come. The Court will be particularly well placed to promote understanding before passing judgment when it is seen as a partner in settling a dispute at an early stage in the process, rather than as a last-resort alternative.

As pointed out by Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui, whose inspired leadership at The Hague is highly appreciated by my authorities, legal settlement is perhaps more widely supported and more sought after when the international atmosphere is less tense. It is unfortunately also true that disregard for international law continues to threaten stability in many regions, while judicial forms of settlement are still widely underutilized.

Brazil has decided to present the candidacy of one of its most illustrious sons, a specialist in international law and diplomacy, a former Foreign Minister and at present a Supreme Court Justice, to one of the vacancies in the Court. This decision reflects my country's belief in the Court's central standing within the institutional framework of the United Nations, as well as its desire to help promote an effective international legal order in a world scenario which offers new hopes for peace and understanding among nations. This decision represents an expression of faith in the future role of the Court and a determination to participate to the best of our ability in strengthening multilateralism.

The President: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item now be closed.

It was so decided.

Mr. Fernández Estigarribia (Paraguay): Allow me, first of all, to express our appreciation for the introduction to the report by the President of the International Court of Justice. I wish sincerely to congratulate him for his excellent work at the head of our world Court, which is celebrating a half century of existence. Similarly, I wish to extend our congratulations to the other Judges of the current Court and to pay tribute to former Judges who laid down many rulings and opinions in the voluntary, effective and conscious exercise of their intellectual and moral independence.

Paraguay accepts international law as part of its national legislation and its Constitution embodies international justice as the ultimate resource for solving international conflicts. Therefore, inspired by our desire for peace and by the loftiest ideals of the United Nations, Paraguay decided a few days ago to contribute to ending the scourge of war and to cooperate in the peaceful settlement of international disputes by proceeding to deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations its instrument of acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The Government of Paraguay's decision to accept voluntarily a new jurisdiction was the result of prior consultation and received the support of the main political forces of my country. This was yet another demonstration of the efforts of Paraguayan society to link itself firmly to the best of universal civilization.

We are living in a world in which events are occurring that would have been unimaginable just a short while ago, major political changes in international relations that prompt us to rethink international law. There is talk of supranational integration, the establishment of ad hoc international courts to judge certain crimes, such as genocide, and the possibility of establishing an international criminal court. All this obliges the international community to reassess the management of the main judicial body of the United Nations in its advisory and litigatory functions in the settlement of international controversies by peaceful means.

At the same time, we note with some concern that, in recent years, the increase in the number of States Members of the United Nations accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice is not significant in relation to the appreciable increase in the number of United Nations Members since its foundation. We therefore hope that more States will accede to the optional clause of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, accepting without further reservations the compulsory competence of the Court, which Mr. Eduardo Jiménez de Aréchaga quite rightly called the most important and comprehensive multilateral judicial agreement that exists at the present time.

Ever since the United Nations was founded, respect for international law and its gradual strengthening have been the pillars of its structure. Therefore, we optimistically support the future work of the International Court of Justice in living up to the challenges we face at the end of this century. We therefore agree with Arnold Toynbee, writing in the prologue to Kurt Breysig's *History of Mankind* when he says:

> "In the brief span of a lifetime, modern technology, eliminating distance, has suddenly merged all of the inhabited world into one single whole. All peoples and cultures, all pious communities on Earth for the first time in history live in close mutual physical contact. However, we continue to be as far apart from one another mentally as before, because the hearts and the sensitivities of mankind cannot keep pace with mechanical discoveries. This means that we are entering the most dangerous phase mankind has ever had to brave. We must live in very close contact with one another in order to get to know each other better."

Today, while forces from many parts of the world and of different beliefs strangely coincide in relentless criticism of the United Nations, we prefer, almost humbly, to tell them that they are wrong and to reaffirm, to the contrary, our faith in law as an element of superior coexistence so as to offset once again the dangers cited by the great philosopher of history. This could be another inspiration for the work of the Court in The Hague.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the five Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

This is the third time that I have had the privilege in this Hall of listening to a statement in which Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, President of the International Court of Justice, has commented with his well-known and admired brilliance and erudition on the annual report of the Court. His comments, which we appreciate, will be very useful in all our work, but particularly so given the report's necessarily technical and formal nature. We are extremely grateful to President Bedjaoui for having added to his comments on the report, as has been customary for him and his predecessor, interesting ideas about general aspects of the work and role of the Court.

Like any national community, the community of nations cannot, as Grotius so eloquently noted, exist without a legal system to govern relations among its members. *Ubi societas, ibi ius*. In any community, whether national or the community of States, the better and more developed the legal system in force is, the more certain peace among its members will be and the greater progress of all kinds the community will be able to achieve.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to conceive of a community whose legal system has no organ which in some way exercises judicial or similar functions. No set of legal rules, no matter how perfect, can be implemented without generating disagreement between the subjects governed. The inability to settle such disagreements is incompatible with the proper functioning of the corresponding legal system. Admittedly the disagreement can be solved by non-judicial means, but such methods are generally not comparable to judicial process. In addition, unlike judicial process, they have the drawback that they do not contribute to the necessary improvement of the system through the interpretation of its rules and the elimination of its loopholes.

Even though a judicial body exists — the Court whose report is before us — the legal system governing the community of States is basically greatly inferior to those inside the entities that comprise the community. As a result of this situation, international law has, conceptually, been placed at the "vanishing point" of the legal system. This is a reflection of several factors of equal significance. Some of these factors are substantive, such as the imperfection of many of the rules of international law and the loopholes that arise therefrom. Another factor is the lack of adequate penalties, including an effective and satisfactory machinery that would, in every appropriate case, make it possible to ensure enforced compliance with such rules. A third factor of equal importance — and one that I wish to address here — is the fact that no State can oblige another State without its consent, in settlement of a dispute between them, to submit to a judicial body that can make a decision binding on both parties.

Clearly, some groups of States have established, in the framework of regional unions, incipient federalist systems with bodies that can make binding decisions on the settlement of disputes between their members. However, such States are few in number and such bodies operate within strict limits, dealing with issues such as the Convention on the Law of the Sea. Each State member of such a union also needs a central judicial body of universal competence to which disputes with States that do not belong to the union can be submitted.

If the financial crisis of the United Nations were to have an adverse impact on the quality of the work of the Court, or if States suspected that this might eventually happen, they might become reluctant to turn to the Court. For practical purposes, this would be tantamount to the disappearance of the institution. The same problem might occur if the financial crisis were significantly to undermine the functioning of the Court. I might add that if, as the result of such a situation, the hands of the Court were tied, as has happened in the past, the financial resources that it consumed, while they might be lower than at present, would effectively be wasted.

If the International Court of Justice were to cease functioning effectively, the international legal system would seriously deteriorate and backslide spectacularly. States would find themselves in a situation similar to that which existed before 1922, when the Permanent Court of International Justice — the venerable predecessor of the present Court — was established. If this were to occur, the only recourse of States wishing to resolve their disputes through binding decisions would be the institution of ad hoc arbitration tribunals. As we all know, while these continue to be available to any State that wishes to use them, for well-known reasons their work is inferior to that of a permanent central tribunal like the International Court of Justice.

For all these reasons, my delegation is deeply concerned about the serious difficulties that the Court is experiencing as a result of the financial crisis of the United Nations. The gravity of the situation for the Court is underlined by the fact that this is the first time that its report to the General Assembly refers to financial problems.

As they have been throughout the current decade, the volume and quality of the work in the period covered by this report are truly impressive. The tasks currently facing the institution will require efforts that are no less intense. One example, among several that I could mention, of the intensity with which the Court works is that, having issued two Advisory Opinions on 8 July 1996, the Court then issued a ruling on 11 July. We admire the dedication of the members of the Court. This was surely achieved with a great deal of effort and stress.

I also wish to emphasize that there are currently several new issues on the Registry of the Court that raise complex and delicate questions. It is in the interests of the international community as a whole that they be resolved.

My comments may have seemed to be elemental or not very original. However, we believe that such matters should be taken into account if we are to appreciate the seriousness of the danger facing the international community arising out of the difficulties being experienced by the International Court of Justice as a result of the financial crisis of the United Nations.

We must find a way of ensuring that this crisis does not undermine the functioning of the institution, which, although it consumes less than 1 per cent of budgetary resources, is extremely useful to the international community.

Mr. O'Hara (Malaysia): My delegation would like to thank the renowned and illustrious Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui, President of the International Court of Justice, for his statement, in which he referred, *inter alia*, to the report of the Court to the General Assembly. However, we regret that the report was circulated for our consideration only today. We hope that, in future, steps are taken to ensure that the report is circulated in a timely manner so as to afford delegations ample time and opportunity to analyse it. In the short time that we have been given to peruse the report, we find that its composition and structure are very similar to those of the reports of previous years. Nevertheless, we congratulate Judge Bedjaoui on his lucid presentation of the issues facing the Court. We are indeed fortunate to have a jurist of Judge Bedjaoui's standing and calibre presiding over the Court.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express sincere condolences to the family of the late Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley and to extend congratulations to Judge Gonzalo Parra-Aranguren, who was elected to serve the remainder of the late Judge's term.

It is very disquieting to note the present difficulties of the Court as articulated in chapter IV of the report — in particular, that the Court has been placed under exceptional strain during a period in which the staff and resources of its Registry have been subjected to severe cuts. We wish to express concern that, at a time of substantial recourse to the Court by States and international organizations, staff and budgetary reductions are inevitably beginning to curtail its established level of judicial service. While we wholeheartedly support the cost-cutting measures being undertaken by the United Nations, we call upon the Organization to ensure that the Court is given funds sufficient for it to continue to function as the premier judicial body in existence today. Clearly, this state of affairs could have been avoided if all Member States had paid their contributions promptly, in full and without conditions.

My delegation notes that there has been increasing recourse to the Court by Member States over the years. This is a positive sign that augurs well for the future of the Court. The Court, in carrying out its entrusted functions, must never lose sight of its representative character. In handing down decisions and opinions based on international law, it can and must play the role of an equalizer of divergent and contrary interests.

In early July this year, the Court handed down its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. My delegation welcomes this Advisory Opinion, which was delivered in response to General Assembly resolution 49/75 K. Malaysia and 21 other countries submitted separate written and oral submissions to The Hague. Malaysia views favourably the decision of the Court that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.

In the view of my delegation, this Advisory Opinion was a major and positive development in the overall context of nuclear disarmament. We view favourably the positivism of the Court when it held that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. My delegation considers this to be an important development in the general disarmament process.

To provide further impetus to the Court's Advisory Opinion, the General Assembly should collectively work towards the process of nuclear disarmament. Malaysia and other like-minded countries are initiating a follow-up draft resolution to the Advisory Opinion of the Court. My delegation salutes the Court for this courageous legal opinion on a very controversial manner. This Opinion of the Court has, in the view of my delegation, reinforced the faith of the international community in the integrity and in the important role the Court plays in the international system.

The Court, given its dual mandate — to decide in accordance with international law the disputes referred to it by States and to give advisory opinions on questions submitted to it by duly authorized international organs and agencies — has an important role to play in the promotion of peace and harmony among the nations and peoples of this world. The processes provided for under the Statute of the Court advance the rule and role of international law. However, much still remains to be done before full respect for the law that regulates relations among States can be achieved.

My delegation has always expressed its confidence in the role and the work of the Court. However, my delegation is of the belief that the Court has yet to realize its full potential. Article 92 of Chapter XIV of the Charter states that the Court is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Yet the utilization of the Court by the Security Council and the General Assembly is still limited. We call upon the General Assembly and the Security Council to consider utilizing the Court for the purpose of interpreting the relevant and applicable law. We would also urge that controversial decisions be referred for review by the Court.

As the United Nations enters its fifty-first year, it has become increasingly clear that it needs revamping. In line with this position, we would further submit that there is an obvious need for a review of the role and composition of the Court, given its fundamental importance as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The Security Council and the Court were established as the United Nations principal organs, and therefore there are undoubted linkages between them. Both these organs, with their important roles, should be representative of today's global community. As we continue in our efforts to reform and restructure the Security Council, it is equally pertinent to review the composition of the Court as well.

In this context, my delegation is of the opinion that the views expressed by some permanent members of the Security Council that their rights, status and prerogatives cannot be altered is inconsistent with the basic principles embodied in the Charter. The position of some of the permanent members that they should be allowed to assume similar rights in other organs of the United Nations is even more unacceptable to my delegation in view of the fact that the Charter does not so provide. The international community has an obligation to itself and to future generations meticulously to scrutinize the credentials of aspiring candidates to the Court, rather than endorsing them on the basis of geopolitical considerations.

This brings me to the next item: the forthcoming elections. On 5 February 1997, the terms of office of five members of the Court will expire. It is therefore necessary at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly to elect five judges for a term of office of nine years. Even though Article 13 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice enables members to be re-elected, Malaysia would like to point out that it is necessary that the body as a whole be representative of the main forms of civilization and that the principal legal systems of the world be reassured. This is the first step that all States should take to ensure the revitalization of the United Nations system.

We thank the five Judges who will be completing their terms of office for the dedicated and invaluable service rendered to the Court and the world community. We extend to all those standing for election, including those seeking re-election, our wishes for success.

In conclusion, it is vital that the role and composition of the Court be re-appraised within the context of the review and reform of global institutions. The current collective drive to reform and revitalize these institutions, including the Court, should be given further impetus. A revitalized Court can play its role more effectively in the advancement of international law and justice and we look forward to a more dynamic, vibrant and revitalized Court for the future. Finally, we wish to reassure the Court of our continued cooperation and support for its work during the coming year.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) *(interpretation from French)*: Allow me, before making a few general comments on the report and role of the International Court of Justice, to perform the very pleasant duty of paying a well-deserved tribute to the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, a diplomat, jurist and statesman with exceptional professional, moral and human qualities, who has left a very clear stamp on the history of international relations over the last four decades. I am proud, like other diplomats and leaders of my generation in Algeria, in Africa and elsewhere to have been his humble disciple.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I therefore cannot forgo the pleasure of welcoming him here today and, through him, the other members of the Court, to whom I am pleased to convey my country's gratitude for the competence and honesty with which they administer the law and serve justice.

Given the new challenges of these final years of our millennium, the International Court of Justice today, half a century after its founding, has become the body to which States, both large and small, and international organizations are turning increasingly to seek justice or to request the Court's authoritative opinion on disputes, differences or legal problems that arise or create differences between them, convinced that the only valid and lasting solution is one based on law.

The comprehensive and brilliant statement by President Bedjaoui on the activities of the Court and its role in international affairs reinforces that feeling and also confirms the growing role of the Court in the settlement of differences between States. In the context of building the new world order, the increased activities of the Court in recent years appear to signal the beginnings of a new and very promising phase in the Court's life. The abundant record of that 50-year-old legal body is already a very positive one and amply demonstrates its ability to meet the new challenges it is facing.

Each time the Court has taken up a dispute or handed down advisory opinions, and whatever the standing and power of the protagonists, the International Court of Justice has always calmly proceeded to enunciate nothing but the law. That is the record of the 50 years of its continued activities, and more specifically it is the record of the past three years, during which the Court has considerably stepped up its work rate and has taken decisions on an infinitely greater number of disputes or legal problems in which its jurisdiction has been sought. We must, however, note that the potential inherent in the Court is still clearly underutilized. The Court has on every occasion demonstrated that it was able to resolve conflicts that had resisted all other means of peaceful settlement of disputes employed hitherto and that it was "the" final recourse.

The various substantive judgments rendered in several border disputes that had been sources of overt or latent conflicts between fraternal African countries, such as, *inter alia*, the dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Chad over the Aouzou Strip, are examples of the positive and salutary role the Court can play if States can only resolve to entrust matters to it.

On the other hand, and notwithstanding the advisory role given to it by Article 96 of the Charter, the Court has been doomed to relative inaction. The opportune initiative taken by the General Assembly to request an advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons may perhaps, we hope, put an end to this period of timidity and groundless reticence on the part of the Assembly to exercise a right entrusted to it under the Charter. Algeria would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the Court for having issued an opinion on such an important and sensitive matter. It also reaffirms its satisfaction at the advisory opinion handed down on 8 July 1996, which we feel reinforces the international community's appeal for universal, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. We believe that that advisory opinion by the Court is an important legal precedent and a major basis for the development of international law in this area and that it will serve the cause of world peace and security.

In addition, the contribution made by the International Court of Justice to the maintenance of international peace and security is very significant, as shown by the increasingly frequent recourse States are having to its services as well as by the good-faith execution of its decisions.

The major issues on which the attention of the Organization is focused today, whether we are talking about the principal themes of the Agenda for Peace, the democratization of United Nations structures and their functioning or improving the Organization's effectiveness, represent a movement, at present relatively limited, in which the Court should legitimately be concerned and, we think, involved.

The international realities of the post-cold-war era do afford the Court new opportunities, required as it is to reassess its role and future action and to adapt itself to the new realities so that it may continue to play the special role entrusted to it within the United Nations and in international affairs.

In this context, the imperfections of the system designed in San Francisco, of which the most striking examples are its lack of a true international legal power and of a means to monitor the constitutionality of the actions of the Organization's principal bodies, should, in this era of reform, encourage us to enter into an in-depth discussion of the appropriate ways and means to remedy the salient deficiencies of the system and give a new lease on life to the rule of law.

In carrying out this vast undertaking and strengthening the role and action of the Court, the political will of States remains the prerequisite without which nothing can be either done or undone. Given the financial difficulties of the Court, which could hamper its activities at the very time it is being called upon to increase their scope, we hope that it will find here in the Assembly the support and understanding it is entitled to expect.

Algeria is fully prepared to act to strengthen the role of the Court and the rule of law, convinced as it is that the alternative, that of strengthening the rule of force, is a much worse choice.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I would like to take this opportunity to express to Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui, President of the International Court of Justice, our appreciation for the report on the Court's work he has presented to the Assembly. As usual, his comments have enriched our debate.

I should also like to express our sorrow at the death on 24 October 1995 of Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley, an illustrious Venezuelan and Latin American jurist, who made such a decisive contribution to the cause of law.

We welcome the fact that the initiative taken by Mexico in 1991 to promote dialogue between the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly is proving productive. A growing number of States feel that the submission of the Court's report to the Assembly is more than a mere autumn ritual. For us, it is an opportunity to strengthen understanding and cooperation between two of the principal organs of the United Nations.

It is precisely to enable this dialogue to become more effective that it is essential for the Court's report to be issued sufficiently in advance of its consideration by Member States. On several occasions we have urged the Secretariat to ensure that the documentation is available in accordance with the arrangements now in force. Today we reiterate that appeal, and we express our concern at the very belated publication of the documents that are the basis of our deliberations.

In the course of this year, the International Court of Justice rendered two advisory opinions on matters of the utmost importance to Mexico because they concern the very survival of mankind. I am referring to the opinions on the Legality of the Use by a State of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict and the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. My country took an active role before the Court during the proceedings relating to these cases. Not only did it file written statements on each case, but it was also represented at and participated in the hearings held by the Court.

Mexico's position concerning the opinions delivered by the Court is contained in document A/51/220, distributed as a working document of the General Assembly. I will therefore confine myself here to emphasizing three elements which we believe are particularly important. First, we welcome the fact that the Court emphasized the universal applicability of the fundamental rules of law concerning armed conflicts. And we in turn wish to stress that among these fundamental rules none is more important than the principle that the rules of international humanitarian law should be fully applied in all circumstances. Secondly, the Court determined that the threat or use of nuclear weapons in general would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law. Thirdly and lastly, the Court unanimously affirmed that all States have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In accordance with the conclusions of the Court, Mexico will continue and intensify its efforts so that nuclear disarmament can become a reality in the near future.

This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the International Court of Justice, an institution which was established as the result of the belief of States that only respect for the fundamental rules of law could guarantee peace. We believe that this significant anniversary provides an appropriate framework within which to start thinking about the prospects, on the eve of a new millennium, for the major judicial body of the United Nations. For 75 years the legal context for the judicial resolution of conflicts between States has not changed. Making only procedural changes, the International Court of Justice has preserved the system it inherited from its predecessor, the Permanent Court of International Justice. We believe that it would be desirable to undertake an evaluation of the way in which we have been applying the statute of the International Court of Justice as well as possible ways of strengthening the role of this body in the world of today and tomorrow.

In the context of the work of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on Strengthening the Role of the Organization, Mexico has pointed out that it is necessary to examine ways of revitalizing the Court, a body which is not a subject of consideration in any of the Working Groups involved in the reform and modernization of the United Nations.

In addition to the need to increase the number of authorized advisory entities, including those advising the Secretary-General, we believe that the Court could be strengthened by the revision of its membership, in the light of the criteria established in Article 9 of its Statute. This article stipulates that, in electing members of the Court, the electors shall bear in mind not only that the persons to be elected should individually possess the qualities required, but also that in the body as a whole the representation of the main forums of civilization and of the principal legal systems of the world should be assured. We believe that a better application of that criterion would strengthen the membership of the Court. At the present time there are regions that are under-represented. These include Latin America. The criterion of the representation of the principal legal systems of the world seems to be increasingly neglected and not to play an important role in the election process. To the extent that all the major legal systems are represented on the Court, its acceptance as a universal organ imparting justice and promoting respect for the rules of international law will be strengthened.

We have mentioned some issues which in our opinion could affect the revitalization of the Court, but this should not be interpreted to mean that there are not other equally important issues. We urge States to take advantage of the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Court's establishment to promote and — through such bodies as the Special Committee on the Charter — participate in deliberations leading to the adoption of measures to increase the contribution of the Court to the peaceful settlement of disputes and the development of international law. We respectfully invite members of the Court to state their views on ways of expanding the role of that body in the coming century, because we are convinced that their comments will prove very useful in future decision-making.

Mr. Rebagliatti (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Allow me, on my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation, to welcome the President of the International Court of Justice, Mohammed Bedjaoui. We are pleased that the General Assembly again has the opportunity to make contact through him with the International Court of Justice and to examine the progress of its work. This periodic contact is of the utmost importance. It reflects the interest of the General Assembly in the activities of the Court. It is also an example of the close cooperation that should prevail among the principal organs of the United Nations so that it can attain its objectives.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's gratitude for the productive work carried out by the members of the International Court of Justice.

In particular, I wish to pay tribute to the judges from Latin America and the Caribbean. Invariably, my region has contributed its best jurists to this lofty tribunal. I must recall here its former President, José María Ruda, in whose honour Argentina created a special prize in the framework of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

A few months ago the international community commemorated in The Hague the fiftieth anniversary of the inaugural session of the International Court of Justice. The ceremony provided a special opportunity to consider the quality and significance of the extensive activity of the International Court of Justice during its first 50 years.

The volume and vital importance of its decisions attest to the vitality of this body to which, since its establishment, States have entrusted questions related to the major and most varied contemporary problems. The more than 80 judgments and advisory opinions are eloquent testimony to the work of the Court. Well-known judgments and advisory opinions such as those on South-West Africa, the delimitation of the continental shelf in the North Sea, fisheries and so forth show, *inter alia*, the important contribution that the International Court of Justice has made to the settlement of disputes of key relevance.

The recent questions submitted to the Court include topics that are crucial to international peace and security such as the crime of genocide or the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, the implications of which are being considered at the moment in another part of the General Assembly. The Advisory Opinion of 8 July this year surely brought together different currents of opinion both within and outside the International Court of Justice, and particularly in the General Assembly. Accordingly, it is an obvious challenge for doctrine, and particularly for Member States, with respect to the gradual development of international law which they are obliged to review. All this, in brief, shows the renewed confidence felt at the international level in the authority, integrity, impartiality and independence of the Court.

The increasing vitality of the International Court of Justice is also reflected in the submission of proposals to strengthen its future role as the main judicial body of the international community organized in the United Nations.

Proposals have been made *inter alia* to strengthen and expand its competence in disputes and its advisory role, particularly by authorizing the Secretary-General to request an advisory opinion from the Court. Initiatives such as these, designed to strengthen the Court's capacity in the peaceful resolution of disputes, deserve thorough analysis by Member States. The Argentine Government is committed to this effort. Therefore, we believe that for the best understanding and proper consideration of the work of the Court and possible expansion of its competence, this plenary should give due time and attention to considering the report. We trust that at the next session of the General Assembly we will receive the report sufficiently in advance to have time to consider it properly.

At the commemorative ceremony at The Hague I mentioned earlier, President Bedjaoui reiterated the promise that President José Gustavo Guerrero formulated on 18 April 1946 to maintain the prestige and authority of the Court, and he renewed his commitment to carrying out the future work of the Court with the backing of its authority and the maturity it has acquired.

We welcome the renewed promise made by President Bedjaoui and, at the same time, we renew our commitment as a Member State to remain faithful to the principle of the peaceful settlement of our disputes.

Mr. Slade (Samoa): My delegation appreciates the report of the International Court of Justice, for which we thank and compliment the President of the Court. We find the report to be clear and sufficient in detail. In particular, I would like to thank President Bedjaoui for introducing the report and for his welcome and very substantial exposition on the Court's contribution to the maintenance of peace.

It is clear from the report that the Court is fulfilling its role as the principal judicial organ of the Organization, a role that is widely accepted. Samoa's own experience as an observer and as a participant in the Court's proceedings bears this out. The Court today has an acknowledged place in the United Nations system, and in the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Compared to the situation in the late 1960s, when few States appeared to want to use it, the Court in recent years has tended to have a crowded list of 10 or more cases, attracting parties from all regions, including our own in the Pacific.

Greater use of the Court has been advocated by the Secretary-General, by successive Presidents of the Court and by many speakers from this podium. It is gratifying that we are moving in this direction. It is a development to be encouraged.

States now seem ready to submit, and to entrust, to the Court disputes concerning a wide range of activities. It is evident from the report that the range of cases and the complexity of subject matter are considerable, even daunting. It is fair to say that this trend will be greatly assisted by growing confidence in the fairness and soundness, and in the timeliness, with which the Court hands down its judgment.

There is particular satisfaction at greater use of the Court when viewed in the context of the United Nations Decade of International Law, during which special attention will be given to the role of the Court in settling inter-State disputes, and more particularly, the Court's role as an instrument of preventive diplomacy, especially through its advisory opinions.

Resort to the Court and its facilities will undoubtedly bring particular problems. Inevitably, for one, there will be delays in disposing of cases submitted to it. Other likely difficulties — indeed other difficulties now being experienced — are detailed in chapter IV of the report.

It would appear from the account given in chapter IV of the report that the manner and quality of management by the Court of its caseload, in the light of its resources and time, might well be one of the most important and basic problems to be resolved. It would seem to my delegation to be an issue perhaps deserving closer analysis.

The Court, of course, must function in a changing world. As an integral part of the United Nations, it is inevitable that the Court, too, must undergo adjustment and change. My own delegation is very firmly of the opinion that any reforms of the Court must be aimed at strengthening the Court, its structure and procedures, as well as the provision of adequate resources for its proper and effective functioning.

We think that the membership of the Court and the tenure and method of election of judges could well benefit from further consideration. This is a matter that has been referred to by a number of previous speakers. Similarly, serious consideration might be given to extending the Court's advisory procedure to the other United Nations organs and entities not currently provided for under the Charter. Further, access to the Court cannot continue to be restricted to nation States.

Acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction is of course the fundamental issue. More has been written on jurisdiction than perhaps on any other aspect of the Court's functioning.

My own delegation believes that compulsory third-party jurisdiction is necessary for the proper application of the principles of the rule of law at the international level. The law should be capable of being authoritatively declared and expounded. It should be done by a judiciary that is completely independent. It should be done in a court before which nations can be compelled to appear.

What seems clear though is that States have their own political perceptions which determine their attitude to increased acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction. It probably is the case that no amount of legal inventiveness will change deep-rooted, political positions on — even opposition to — binding third-party settlement. Therefore what probably matters more in the long run is that, with increasing use of the Court, this trend will be encouraged more by the merits of the Court's own performance, in terms of the fairness, soundness and expedition of the Court's procedures and judgments.

In this respect, may I say that my delegation expresses the highest compliment to the Court on its historic Advisory Opinion on the question of the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. It is a profoundly important measure of advice from the International Court of Justice, in essence because of the important and very significant perspective it provides — the correct perspective in my delegation's opinion — on commitments to total disarmament and the obligation to negotiate all aspects of nuclear disarmament.

At a later time we will have occasion to express ourselves in greater detail on the Court's Opinion. But let me say here that the Court's judgment and Opinion of 8 July 1996 on that question has been universally welcomed and has given reassurance of its outstanding role in upholding the primacy of international law.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: May I at the outset join previous speakers in welcoming the President of the International Court of Justice, who has presented the report on the Court's activity for the past year. My country is grateful for the renewed opportunity for the General Assembly to consider the report of the Court in order to reconfirm its authority in promoting the primacy of, and ensuring full respect for, international law.

Respect for the rules of international law and heeding those rules has been, and continues to be, among the principal commitments of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Proceeding from this, my country has invoked the Court in more than one case and has implemented the judgments of the Court in all cases, including those that were against its interests. I would refer here to the judgment on the border dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Chad.

My country also submitted to the Court the dispute between it and certain Western States known as the Lockerbie issue, believing that the Court is qualified to settle that dispute. Logic would have suggested not resorting to the Security Council until the Court had its say. Unfortunately, the States concerned did not await the Court's judgment. Instead, they politicized the entire dispute, sought to involve the Security Council, and made it adopt resolutions against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya leading to unjust sanctions from which the Libyan people and neighbouring States continue to suffer.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya did not object to bringing to justice those accused of being implicated in the incident involving the United States aircraft over Lockerbie. However, we believe that the dispute between us and the Western States concerned is limited to the place of judgment. While the States concerned insist on trial in either Scotland or the United States, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya believes this insistence to be intransigent and unjust.

Libyan legislation does not allow the extradition of its citizens to foreign courts. There is no convention for extradition between us and either of the two States. Therefore we can either await the Court's judgment or agree to a compromise, which would be to conduct a trial at the Court's seat in The Hague with Scottish judges and under Scottish law.

The two accused have agreed to appear before the Court at its seat in The Hague and the Libyan Arab

Jamahiriya has so informed the Security Council. My country's position is testimony to our respect for international legitimacy as well as our flexibility in dealing with this problem. It is a position that has been supported by many international organizations including the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity and members of the Security Council itself.

In conclusion, I cannot fail to reaffirm that my country has full respect for the International Court of Justice and we have great hopes in its role in making international law prevail, particularly at a time when some States are attempting to impose the right of might and to use might as a means of achieving hegemony, and one State is attempting to place itself above international law by adopting extraterritorial legislation which it seeks to apply to individuals and entities under other jurisdictions. This is a violation of international law and disregards its rules as well as all conventions, whether bilateral or multilateral.

Mr. Legal (France) *(interpretation from French)*: My presence at this rostrum might be a surprise, because France traditionally does not speak when the International Court of Justice submits its annual report to the General Assembly. Without intending discourtesy to other speakers, France does not believe that it is for a political organ or its members to comment on the work of a court, especially the principal judicial body of the United Nations.

However, this year we think it necessary to bend that rule to indicate our firm commitment to the idea that the Court should have the resources enabling it to work in conformity with the rules governing it, and in particular with regard to the translation of documents produced by the parties.

The French delegation is concerned at the current situation of allocation of financial resources, especially for translation, which seem insufficient to ensure that certain important documents on cases before the Court are translated into the Court's languages. It might even be said that there is a real risk of crippling the institution. The report of the Court gives a clear, disquieting picture of this unprecedented situation beginning in paragraph 184.

Judge Bedjaoui has convinced us of the seriousness and the urgency of this problem. We are determined that a solution must be found without delay so that the judges can work under conditions in keeping with the rules in force. This is the least that the United Nations can do for what is the highest international court — and the only one whose jurisdiction is universal.

Mr. Benítez Saenz (Uruguay) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Uruguay has devoted and will continue to devote particular attention to the work of the International Court of Justice. Some years ago, Uruguay had the honour of being able to make a contribution through the presence on the Court of two distinguished judges: E. C. Armand-Ugon and E. Jiménez de Aréchaga.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, since its establishment we have accepted the jurisdiction of the principal international judicial body, and we recognize its Statute as an integral part of the United Nations Charter. This recognition is simply a reaffirmation of the primacy of international law and of our resolute dedication to the maintenance of peace governed by the rule of law, which are pillars of the foreign policy of our Republic. Therefore, we recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, and we have incorporated this in many international instruments to which we are parties.

In considering this year's report of the Court, we would like to express particular gratitude to its President, Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, and to the officials who participated in its drafting, because it gives a detailed picture of the Court's activity during the period under review.

But over and above listing the activities of the Court, the report indicates the vitality, the strength and the international prestige of the International Court of Justice today. In respect of strengthening the Court, at a time when we are considering the possibility of broadening the functions and membership of the Security Council, my delegation shares the concern expressed earlier by some delegations about the possibility of giving the International Court of Justice the power to oversee the legality of the actions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly itself. We recognize that this is a complicated subject; in our opinion it requires further study.

Turning to the report, I cannot be silent about the death of Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley, a member of the Court. His career as a jurist and his outstanding work at the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea reflected his technical ability and the kind of man he was. We share the deep sorrow of his compatriots and his family members.

We note with optimism that some of the cases which required an opinion of the Court on nuclear testing have now been substantively resolved, since most members of the international community have adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). But the case we consider most important is the one on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. The request for an opinion from the General Assembly in resolution 49/75 K was processed with the usual guarantees of the procedural rules governing the activities of the Court. We consider that the unanimous opinion that there is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons should become the legal and political foundation for greater progress towards total denuclearization. Interested States were able to submit and defend their arguments both in writing and in public oral hearings. The fact that 45 States participated directly in the Court's deliberations clearly indicates the importance that the international community attached to that case, and further strengthened the historic opinion that was adopted.

We trust that both the legal message and the political repercussions will receive the proper reception from States that still possess nuclear weapons.

Lastly, we must mention the difficulties raised by the Court in chapter IV of its report. The statement that the financial crisis of the United Nations is having a serious impact on the work of the Court should be of concern to us all. Recalling last year's report of the Court, we note in that report that even though the financial difficulties of the Organization were widespread, the Court did not feel it necessary expressly to mention them in its report, as it does this year.

In the relevant Committee, my delegation will address budgetary issues carefully. But we cannot be silent here. Controlling the expenditures of the Organization and increasing its efficiency must never mean a deterioration in the work of the International Court of Justice. We must find solutions in this area. We hope that this budgetary situation will not continue.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. May I take it that it is the wish of Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 13?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 98 *(continued)*

Operational activities for development

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256)

Mr. Tello (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On 30 September, a commemorative meeting was held here at Headquarters to review the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children, which was attended by the Ministers of the six convening countries.

At that meeting the Secretary of Health of my country reported on the actions taken and measures adopted by the Government of Mexico to attain the goals established at the Summit. He referred to the progress achieved and to the obstacles we have encountered in the implementation of the National Programme of Action 1995-2000. Today, before the General Assembly, I should like to reiterate my Government's commitment to the well-being of children.

The report submitted by the Secretary-General forms an excellent basis for evaluating the progress we have made in fulfilling the commitments undertaken in 1990 and for identifying the areas where we must redouble our efforts in order to attain the objectives set at the Summit. That report reflects the major progress achieved in various regions of the world, based on the implementation of national plans of action in most Member States.

These programmes of action, based on the framework provided by the Summit, reflect a proven effectiveness strategy. They have accelerated the process of change with a view to the survival, development and well-being of children. Their primary advantage is the inclusion of concrete goals, which enables systematic and periodic evaluations. The national programmes have also succeeded in securing political endorsement at the highest governmental levels as well as the active participation of broad sectors of civil society.

Disease prevention is one of the areas in which significant improvement can be seen in the situation of children. Increased vaccination services, the eradication of polio, the control of disorders due to iodine deficiency, and the promotion of maternal nutrition under adequate conditions are clearly important achievements. Now the challenge, in many cases, is to maintain what has been achieved.

The report, of course, calls attention to those goals that are far from being attained, such as reducing child malnutrition and maternal mortality. The Secretary-General also emphasizes that the lack of water and sanitation services, as well as illiteracy, are problems that, unfortunately, persist in many countries.

Among the results achieved in my country, I should like to mention the reduction in child mortality, particularly due to diarrhoeal disease and acute respiratory infections; an increase in vaccination coverage; the eradication of polio; and the reduction in other illnesses, such as neonatal tetanus and measles. Other improvements include the iodization of salt, access to basic education, a reduction in school drop-out rates and illiteracy, and broader access to drinking water.

Despite these positive aspects, there are still great social disparities in my country. We will therefore redouble our efforts to consolidate our gains and to extend them to more marginalized areas and populations.

There are also goals towards which the desired progress has not been made. This is true of the reduction in the incidence of maternal mortality and low birth weight; access to information and family planning services for adolescents; the provision of drinking water in remote rural areas and marginalized urban areas; and the provision of sewage services.

Another important challenge for us is to improve the quality of school education and overcome the unacceptable gender differences in the level of school attendance and illiteracy rates. In addition, my Government is concerned about the increasing numbers of boys and girls who are victims of exploitation, physical and emotional violence, abandonment and injustice.

To ensure that the Government's efforts on behalf of children are sustained and to enable us fully to attain the goals set, we are undertaking extensive, in-depth social reform to promote integrated programmes with actions and measures that are more specific and, ultimately, more effective in combating poverty. The Government of Mexico is firmly committed to responding effectively, on a daily basis, to the needs of children.

The 1990 World Summit for Children was widely recognized as one of the great successes of the United Nations. Owing to the major political commitments entered into by the leaders of various countries, which were translated into concrete action, the question of children is now at the top of agendas of individual countries and of the international community.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels, because a great deal remains to be done. With political will and a sense of social responsibility, we must pledge to work towards ensuring that all the Summit's goals become a daily reality as soon as possible, so that all the boys and girls of the world can, as they should, enjoy life, play and prosper without oppression, suffering or want.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to propose, if there is no objection, that the list of speakers for the debate on this item be closed at 4 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

Mr. Tchoulkov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: The Russian delegation attaches great importance to the discussion by the General Assembly of the mid-decade review of progress on the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit for Children. The Summit, held on 29-30 September 1990, was an important landmark for the international community, providing a strong impetus for national and international activities in this field. This has been confirmed by the development of national programmes of action for children in 155 countries and by the ratification, by 187 countries, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on progress at mid-decade on implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children (A/51/256). The Russian delegation notes with satisfaction the substantial progress made in attaining a number of the goals set at the Summit, particularly in the areas of the reduction of child mortality, immunization, the elimination of iodine-deficiency disorders, the decrease in the number of polio and tuberculosis cases, and the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately, as is clear from the report, progress appears slower towards such goals as improving the quality of nutrition, reducing maternal mortality, and providing universal access to basic education, particularly for girls.

The Russian delegation believes that the results of the mid-decade review and the national reports prepared by many countries should be actively used by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to modify its targets for the period up to the year 2000 and to adjust, if necessary, its national activities.

In discussing the implementation of the decisions of the Summit for children, one must acknowledge the important role that UNICEF has played and continues to play. I should also like to recall the great personal contribution made by Mr. Grant, former Executive Director of the Fund, to the holding of the Summit and to the implementation of its decisions. We note with satisfaction that the implementation of that forum's decisions is one of the main activities of the Children's Fund, and a high priority for Ms. Carol Bellamy. The Fund has done important work in assisting countries, including Russia, in the preparation of their national programmes of action for children and their subsequent implementation. We deeply appreciate the Fund's activities in the area of the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of provisions of the Declaration and Plan of Action, particularly within the framework of the annual *The Progress of Nations* report and in the area of the development of inter-agency cooperation in this field.

We believe that the Fund's future activities should focus on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the strengthening of countries' national capacity to provide basic social services, and the mobilization of the efforts and resources of Governments, civil society, donor countries and the relevant international organizations in order to attain the goals set by the World Summit for Children.

The President and the Government of the Russian Federation attach great importance in their activities to improving the status of children and implementing the Summit's Declaration and Plan of Action. A mechanism has been set up to formulate and carry out State social policies relating to the protection of the rights and interests of children, at both the national and regional levels. A Commission on Women, Family and Demography has been established at the President's request. The State Duma of the Russian Federal Assembly has formed a Committee on Women, Family and Youth. The Government has also established an inter-agency commission to coordinate activities connected with the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and Plan of Action for children, which is headed by a Deputy Chairman of the Government.

A set of far-reaching regulatory documents on childhood problems was drafted and adopted. Special mention should also be made of the 1992 presidential decree on priority measures to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Children and the Children of Russia federal programme, which was granted presidential status in 1994 and which sought to create conditions for the normal development of children and to provide them with social protection during a time of radical socio-economic changes and reforms. The Children of Russia programme comprises 11 special-purpose programmes: Disabled Children, Orphaned Children, Preventive Measures for Unattended Children, Children of the North, Children of Chernobyl, Children of Refugees and Internally Displaced Families, Gifted Children, Vaccination Preventive Measures, Safe Motherhood, Family Planning and Promotion of Social Services for Families and Children.

The preparation and adoption of the National Plan of Action for Children, approved in September 1995 by presidential decree, marked an important milestone. The priority tasks of the plan are the promotion of stronger legal protection for children; support for the family as the child's natural environment; ensuring safe motherhood and the protection of children's health; and providing for children's upbringing, education and development, and for their support in especially difficult circumstances. This document has become the basis for concrete action to protect children and motherhood for the coming five years.

The Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Children for the period up to 1998, approved last January, was the first step in the implementation of the national Plan of Action. In order to monitor social indicators regarding the situation of children, an annual State report on the situation of children in the Russian Federation began publication in 1994. Measures aimed at implementing the objectives and principles of the World Summit for Children have been taken at both the national and the grass-roots level. To date, regional children's programmes have been adopted in 50 of the 89 regions of the country.

Russia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in June 1990. In 1993 we submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child the first report on the implementation of the Convention. At present, we are working on the second report, to be submitted next autumn.

Some improvements have been noted as a result of persistent efforts along these lines. In particular, there is a trend towards a reduction in infant mortality; juvenile infectious disease morbidity has fallen by 17 per cent; the free provision of special dairy products has been initiated for infants under two years of age; the dairy product output for toddlers has gone up by 16 per cent over three years; the number of social assistance centres for families and children has increased fourfold over three years; the school drop-out rate decreased by 40 per cent in 1995 alone; more than 100 rehabilitation centres for disabled children have been established; and more children are receiving social benefits.

However, the situation remains complicated. Of particular concern is the poverty of a large part of the population; in 1995, 25 per cent of the population had an income that was below subsistence level.

The result is poorer nutrition and worse children's health. The problems of orphaned children have worsened. Juvenile delinquency and the rise in drug addiction among adolescents are of concern. There is an acute shortage of budgetary resources to resolve these and other problems of childhood and motherhood. The non-governmental organizations that could undertake to resolve some childhood problems are still weak.

We hope that the recently adopted UNICEF regional programme of action in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic, the opening of a regional office of the Fund in Geneva and a liaison office in Moscow, and the setting up of a regional fund to finance activities in non-programme countries, will enhance the potential of UNICEF activities in the region, including in Russia, and help to improve the situation for children in Russia during this difficult period of market reforms.

Mr. Reid (Australia): It is clear to all that the United Nations has a role to play in meeting the contemporary challenges faced by the international community. The United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations pledge this institution to support and strengthen fundamental human rights, social progress, tolerance and the maintenance of international peace and security.

As recently as this current session, Australia, through an address by the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to the United Nations and indicated its preparedness to continue to work jointly with Members to achieve these goals.

Sustained effort across all areas of the Charter is fundamental to broad-based and lasting progress. We recognize the critical role in this matrix of the work of United Nations operational activities in supporting, through international partnership, national capacities and progress in the economic, social and related fields.

The World Summit for Children, held in this city six years ago, quite properly highlighted the priority concern of all Members for children and adopted a Plan of Action to address these concerns. The Summit was also the first of a series of international conferences and summits that between them have articulated agreed priorities for economic and social progress or, as we now term them, measures for the eradication of poverty. As highlighted by the Secretary-General's report on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children, the Summit was unique in that it produced specific, measurable and time-bound goals. We have declared what we will do and when we will do it. It is therefore appropriate that this Assembly now examine progress with regard to these goals.

For our own part, Australia, under its new Government, recognizes and acknowledges the need for an expanded and high level of immunization for children, and this is reflected centrally in our own health policy.

The progress described in the report is sound. Progress has been made, reflecting effective commitment at the national, regional and international levels. Progress on child immunization, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, is impressive. This is practical progress by nations in meeting declared priorities and is a concrete demonstration of the worth of international cooperation. National Governments, the United Nations Children's Fund and related United Nations funds and programmes, with the important inclusion of the United Nations Development Programme, can be justifiably proud of these achievements. Australia, too, has been pleased to play a part in this achievement through our support for activities undertaken by both national Governments and the United Nations system.

Nevertheless, the gains have not gone far enough and have been neither universal nor uniform. Progress in reducing infant mortality has been too slow. This is particularly deplorable given that effective, low-cost technologies and interventions currently exist. Priority needs to be given to those regions in which mortality is highest, targeting the major causes of preventable child mortality. Twelve million children under five years of age die each year. The majority of these could be saved by practical, low-cost interventions. If only one achievement results from this session of the Assembly, it must surely be a commitment to apply now the available and affordable solutions that are at hand to the prevention of the deaths of children under five years of age. This single action would do as much to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children as has been achieved in the preceding period.

More also needs to be done to advance child literacy, reduce the unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality and strengthen the social and economic status of women and children. These are complex challenges. They demand carefully crafted responses in many individual instances. Australia remains committed to supporting effective national and United Nations programmes that target these key areas and contribute to sustainable development.

Australia, in the company of many other countries, agrees that more needs to be done — and done more quickly — to meet the provisions of the Charter. Despite good progress having been made, wastage, duplication and missed opportunities have occurred too often. We are committed to making the United Nations system and its operational activities more responsive, better targeted and fully accountable to Members.

Financing is a part of this effort. We accept that more needs to be done to place the operational activities of the United Nations on a secure and predictable financial footing. In this respect, the issue of burden-sharing is as relevant as the absolute levels of resources. We also see sharing of experiences, in particular South-South cooperation, as valuable in providing for unmet needs and strengthening international cooperation.

Greater effectiveness within current resource levels is also a key aspect. The growth in both the number and complexity of challenges faced by United Nations operational activities requires greater efficiency on all fronts. We will work with the United Nations and Members to achieve these necessary efficiencies. We are concerned that reform initiatives begun some time ago are yet to bear fruit at the all-important country level. Like others, we are impatient for real progress and the realization of efficiency dividends that can be reinvested back into the programmes of the operational activities.

Fifteen dollars represent the average cost of the vaccines, syringes, cold chain equipment and health worker's training and salary which are needed to immunize, for life, one child against the six major childhood diseases. We are advised that the cost of a single page of United Nations documentation in the six official languages is $900. What greater motivation do we need to pursue more effective and efficient operation of the United Nations system than the potential for 60 additional, at-risk children to be vaccinated for life for every page of United Nations documentation we give up. There are, of course, other substantive efficiencies we can and must pursue.

In closing, Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and the progress it describes on what must be a priority for all of us. The review process and the progress against the goals set at the World Summit for Children it describes have been valuable in maintaining commitment and mobilization of effort for children. However, more needs to be done in meeting the basic needs of children. Australia will continue to work with partners to address these pressing challenges.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated States align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. Iceland and Liechtenstein also align themselves with this statement.

Six years ago, in 1990, 71 Heads of State or Government gathered in this Assembly Hall to adopt the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for its implementation. Not only was this Summit a landmark occasion in its own right, but it was also, appropriately, the first in a series of major United Nations summits and conferences that will end with the World Food Summit in Rome next month. These meetings have helped redefine our thinking on human development and have led to a consensus at the international level on how we should go about achieving a better quality of life for all people. Each of the conferences has reaffirmed our commitment to meeting the needs of children.

It is noteworthy that we are assessing progress towards the goals we have set ourselves for the survival, protection and development of all children almost 50 years to the day since United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established and in a world where there has been almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A remarkable 187 States have now ratified the Convention, which provides for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Governments must now ensure the implementation of the obligations they have undertaken under the Convention. These obligations are closely interconnected with the goals of the children's Summit. The European Union wishes to stress that the best interests of the child must underlie all of our actions, including ensuring full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by the girl child.

Among the ways in which our commitment to children finds practical expression is in the large number of countries — 150 — which have drawn up national programmes of action to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Children. In addition, in many countries there are complementary programmes at regional and local levels.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on progress to date. The European Union finds encouragement in the overall positive trends that are reported and appreciates the efforts that have been made, often in difficult circumstances, to improve children's survival prospects and the quality of their lives. Developments such as near-universal immunization coverage; the great progress which has been made in the eradication of guinea worm disease; the prevention of iodine-deficiency disorders; the promotion of oral rehydration programmes; and improvements in access to safe water must all be commended. Of course, the sustainability of these achievements, including through the development of local capacity, is now of crucial importance and, in this context, reliable indicators and monitoring and evaluation are essential.

While there has been solid progress, it must be acknowledged that this progress has been uneven between goals, between regions and subregions and within countries in those regions. The European Union remains deeply concerned about the millions of children living in poverty throughout the world and particularly about the situation of women and children in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia, where relatively little progress has been made. Children growing up in poverty are often permanently disadvantaged.

Sadly, the goals regarding improved nutrition, access to sanitation and maternal mortality rates have not been met and progress on basic education, particularly for girls, is not on track.

Thus, while much has been done in the area of children's survival, much remains to be done to ensure their development and protection. We must work not only to meet the basic survival goals undertaken but also to place more emphasis on the protection of children from abuse, exploitation and neglect. We must do more to take care of them in emergencies and in armed conflicts situations. In this context, we note the substantial report of the Secretary-General's expert on the impact of armed conflict on children.

The European Union reiterates its strong commitment to implementing the Stockholm Agenda for Action Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. We support the efforts of the working group that is drafting an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We support all efforts to eliminate child labour and we urge Governments to take all necessary measures for an immediate elimination of the most extreme and hazardous forms of child labour. We express again our deep concern at the growing number of street children. In addition, the European Union will continue to work towards improving the situation of children with disabilities in order to ensure that they enjoy their human rights fully.

We commend the United Nations system, particularly UNICEF and also the International Labour Organisation and World Health Organization for their efforts to assist countries in the implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Children. As noted earlier in this statement, we now have an international consensus on human development and, since the adoption of the Declaration, the particular needs of children have been placed in this broader context. We support the integrated approach which has been taken by the United Nations system to the follow-up to the summits and conferences and we encourage the relevant bodies, particularly those involved in the implementation of the Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences, to continue to work to ensure that all commitments relating to children are met.

The European Union reaffirms its commitments at the national level and as part of the international community, which shares in the responsibility to ensure the survival, protection and development of all children. Some adjustment and reorientation of work plans and action to be taken will be required in order to concentrate over the next few years on those areas where there has been relatively little progress. The European Union has noted the Secretary-General's proposal to have an end-of-decade review meeting. We expect to see not only more progress on child survival, but also great improvement in the quality of life of all of our children in the coming years.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this morning's meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers on this item this afternoon.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.35

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session
Official Records

35th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 15 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 156

Observer Status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/51/L.1)

The President: I call on the representative of Sweden to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.1.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): It is an honour for me to introduce, on behalf of the 43 co-sponsors, the draft resolution entitled "Observer Status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly", contained in document A/51/L.1. I should mention that in that document the Islamic Republic of Iran was inadvertently omitted as an original co-sponsor of the draft. The following countries have also informed us that they wish to join the list of sponsors: Australia, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Moldova, Romania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

Combating and preventing international crime is a crucial challenge to the international community. Unless we cooperate at a global level, we will not succeed in this endeavour. It is therefore essential to do what we can to facilitate and promote cooperation and coordination between the different organs involved in combating crime with transnational ramifications.

The work of Interpol in this area is well known and widely recognized. As many as 176 States are currently represented in Interpol, making it a unique global forum for crime prevention. Interpol has cooperated with the United Nations for years on a wide-ranging set of issues related to crime prevention and law enforcement. Last year, at the Interpol General Assembly in Beijing, the members of Interpol unanimously adopted a resolution expressing Interpol's desire to obtain observer status with the United Nations General Assembly in order to provide for still-closer cooperation between the organizations.

Against this background, my delegation, together with other delegations from all the different regional groups, has submitted the draft resolution before us. We believe that granting Interpol observer status with the General Assembly will contribute greatly to efforts to combat international crime. Interpol is an intergovernmental organization that meets the criteria for the granting of observer status with the General Assembly laid down in decision 49/426. The operative part of the draft resolution invites the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution. It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/1).

The President: In accordance with the resolution just adopted, I now call on Mr. Björn Eriksson, President of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol.

Mr. Eriksson (International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol): The Secretary General of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, Mr. Raymond Kendall, and I are very honoured to be present in the United Nations General Assembly today. On behalf of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, I should like to take the opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the decision to grant the organization the status of observer to the United Nations General Assembly.

We are very proud of the fact that next week we shall be able to report back to our governing body, the Executive Committee, and to our General Assembly that we have achieved the objective of our General Assembly last year, namely to obtain observer status within the United Nations General Assembly.

The Secretary General and I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Swedish delegation to the United Nations and to the Member countries that have representatives on Interpol's Executive Committee, as well as to the other sponsors of the resolution, who have done so much to promote ICPO-Interpol's observer status within the United Nations General Assembly.

The mission of ICPO-Interpol, with its 176 member countries, is to combat international offences against ordinary criminal law while respecting human rights and the laws of its member countries. The United Nations and the ICPO-Interpol are in many ways carrying out the same mission whose aim is to create a safer world. Consequently, our two organizations have, for many years, cooperated in many sectors relating to crime prevention and law enforcement. Today's decision will mean that we have formed an even better platform at the highest level to reinforce and extend our cooperation. Let us not forget that our two organizations serve the vast majority of people in the world in the fight against the minority that commits crimes. Today's decision, therefore, will benefit not only our two organizations, but also the people we serve.

Today the International Criminal Police Organization is equipped with highly sophisticated information technology facilities as well as an advanced, fast and secure communications network, which makes it possible for us to transmit information from one continent to another with absolute security. The Organization also has an analytical Crime Intelligence Unit working on international crime on the basis of the information received from all 176 member countries. The Unit produces reports that are of the utmost importance for forming effective law-enforcement strategies and policies.

For some time now, we have been engaged in a regionalization process and have established subregional bureaux in Asia, Africa and South America. We foresee that this development will continue and that Interpol will be able to enhance law-enforcement cooperation at the regional level.

Finally, the United Nations, its agencies and Interpol have cooperated for many years in the field of law enforcement. During recent years, we have expanded cooperation into new areas, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. I am certain that in future we shall find even more new areas for cooperation.

As representatives of the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, the Secretary General and I are convinced that our organization has the ability and structure to meet the demands of the future. We hope that through joint efforts, together with the United Nations, we shall be able to step into the twenty-first century and prove even more effective in the fight against international crime.

We believe that the greatest threat to our democracy today is that presented by the menace of organized crime and drug trafficking, whose combined resources, derived from their illegal activities, enable them to corrupt our democratic institutions at the highest level. With political will and an action-oriented approach, we shall be in a much more favourable position. The higher status granted to ICPO-Interpol will enable the organization better to combine and coordinate its actions in the furtherance of our primary objective — to make the world a safer place. Once again, the Secretary General and I renew our thanks and appreciation.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 156?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 98 (*continued*)

Operational activities for development

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256)

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): The World Summit for Children was a historic landmark not only because it gathered 71 Heads of State and 88 ministerial delegates to agree on a document, but also because it launched an unprecedented movement in favour of children throughout the world.

The progress achieved since the World Summit for Children is encouraging and proves that the United Nations can play an effective role in the field of development. One could argue that the progress would have been achieved anyway. This may be true to some extent, but the establishment of time-bound and measurable goals by the Summit certainly had a major impact in mobilizing commitment and resources.

Brazil not only ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but has also made positive strides towards the end-decade goals, particularly in the fields of immunization, salt iodization and vitamin A supplementation. A key element in this effort was the establishment of partnerships on various levels in the implementation of the World Summit's goals.

On one level, close collaboration was established between the Government and civil society. The preparation of the programme of action was the result of a participatory process. The organ responsible for the definition of national policies and guidelines relating to children — the Council for Defence of the Child and Adolescent — is actually composed of representatives both of various ministries and of non-governmental organizations. This approach has conferred greater legitimacy on policies and actions and at the same time has helped to promote awareness and the mobilization of local populations.

A second level of partnership is embodied in the coordination of actions between federal, state and municipal governments. Decentralization has been a key feature of our national follow-up process to the World Summit for Children. Theoretically, it would have been easier for the federal Government to prepare a national programme of action and to consult with State Governments on it. Instead, we chose to launch a process that resulted in the preparation of programmes of actions at the State level, with the strong involvement of municipalities. The importance of this approach is that it fostered a sense of joint responsibility among the different spheres of government. At the same time, it ensured that the specific needs of each region were adequately taken into account.

On still another level, we developed a partnership approach with our neighbours. In 1994, the 28 Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean ratified their commitment to the goals for children by subscribing to the Nariño Accord. Earlier this year, our countries gathered again in Santiago to take stock of their policies and to discuss future directions. The regional partnership has provided the opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean to develop its own perspective on children's issues — for instance, by introducing commitments related to child rights additional to those initially agreed in the World Summit for Children.

Last but not least comes partnership with children themselves. In Brazil, we have been working together with grass-roots organizations that are actually led by children. Our approach is in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which views children as social subjects and not only as objects of policies. In all those partnerships, the role of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a catalyst for action has been important.

According to the Secretary-General's report, there is:

> "an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children." *(A/51/256, para. 11)*

Yet there are major challenges ahead.

It is important to keep the momentum going in countries that have already reached the mid-decade goals, or even the end-decade goals, and not to bask in the warmth of past achievements. We should be concerned with sustainability of goals in countries that risk being marginalized in terms of support by the international community. It is too soon for the international community, in particular for UNICEF, to reduce its support to those countries.

Another challenge will be to accelerate progress towards the end-decade goals, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Some end-decade goals will be more difficult to achieve than the mid-decade ones because they involve more complex actions. Brazil remains committed to accelerating the pace, particularly towards the goals of reducing maternal mortality and of improving the quality of basic education.

As for basic education, the prospects are particularly encouraging. We are focusing on better training and salaries for teachers, ensuring that the resources for education go directly to the schools and that expenditures are supervised by local communities, as well as on improving education materials and technologies.

A constitutional amendment proposed by the Federal Government and already approved in the first round of voting will ensure an increase of resources for basic education next year from approximately $80 to $300 per child per year, which is more than the level of $230 recommended by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil attaches great importance to improving the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. Particularly concerned by reports of child labour, child prostitution and other forms of violence, the Federal Government has embarked on a national campaign against the exploitation of children and adolescents. We are expanding the coverage of a programme aimed at providing a monthly allowance of $50 to families who remove their children from work in mines and plantations and send them to school.

We are also concerned with the situation of children in armed conflict. The report on this subject, prepared by Mrs. Graça Machel — the expert designated by the Secretary-General, to whom I wish to pay tribute here — provides a sound analysis on the subject and contains recommendations that should be implemented. We will certainly take these findings into account in our bilateral cooperation programmes, such as those with Angola and Mozambique.

In response to the threat that landmines pose to civilians, particularly children, Brazil imposed a moratorium on the export of such weapons and is supporting the negotiation of a convention to ban landmines.

The Secretary-General's report does not contain an assessment of the progress in ensuring improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. The establishment of measurable indicators to assess this goal is certainly not an easy task. However, we are convinced that, with or without such indicators, the full implementation of the standards contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to be pursued actively by the international community. The "rights" approach of the Convention increasingly will become the overarching basis for our future actions in favour of children.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): It is a pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity to review the progress towards implementation of the goals set by the World Summit for Children here in New York just over six years ago.

The mid-decade review of progress towards the goals set at the World Summit for Children presents a unique opportunity to refocus the attention of the world and of each country on our children. It is an opportunity to evaluate successes as well as shortfalls, to learn the lessons of the past five years and to use those lessons in identifying the strategies we will need to reach the Summit goals and to sustain our success.

As a Member State representative, I would like to take a few moments to review some of the actions that my Government has taken to achieve the goals agreed at the Summit in 1990. As is true for almost all countries, the well-being of our nation's women and children has improved in some ways, but has not done well in others.

I would like to highlight some of the encouraging trends: first, the rate of full immunization for two-year olds has increased; secondly, infant mortality continues to decline; thirdly, teen birth rates for those aged 15 to 19 have declined, although the teen birth rate is still higher than 20 years ago.

There are also some less positive trends, and I think we should share the good as well as the not-so-good. First, AIDS has become the third leading cause of death among American women 25 to 44 years of age; among adolescents with AIDS, 38 per cent are female. Secondly, about 25 million women smoke in the United States, causing the deaths of an estimated 106,000 women and 3,500 infants each year. Thirdly, violence is a major public health problem, with more than one million children and women injured each year. Fourthly, for many indicators of well-being, minority children and youth fare much worse than majority children and youth.

As a Member State, we endeavour to take stock of our gains, to understand where we can improve, and to prepare our responses. To do this, it is crucial that we have the most accurate and comprehensive trend information possible. We have worked hard to improve the quality and completeness of this information.

Our children and youth are truly our nation's most valuable resource. The mid-decade goals and the goals for the year 2000 help us establish priorities for the protection and nurturing of that resource. We are taking this data and the lessons learned about where further improvement is necessary and possible, and using it to ensure that the aspirations of the World Summit for Children become a reality.

I will now turn to international efforts. As a donor, the United States is very pleased to hear about the progress that has been made to date towards achieving the Summit goals. The accomplishments outlined in the present document are substantial, and we commend them. At the same time, the United States believes that additional plans and actions would enable us to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by this review.

We recommend a process of cost-effective consultation with partners and international experts to be planned and implemented — as was done for the Summit for Children — to identify lessons learned and strategies needed to reach the goals for the year 2000.

In challenging areas such as acute respiratory infection, nutrition, measles and maternal mortality, international partners, including the United States, have gained substantial experience since 1990. Consultation with these partners would enhance the ability of the United Nations to support implementing countries by making this experience available. As indicated in this progress report, continued advocacy and leadership are needed by organizations of the United Nations system, notably the United Nations Children's Fund, in this regard.

We sincerely hope that this mid-decade review will help to revitalize the consensus and commitment to children and the goals for them that were initiated at the 1990 Summit.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We are participating in the discussion of item agenda 98 at a time of increasing international commitment to safeguarding the rights of the child and the potential of children. This commitment has already been reaffirmed by the unprecedented number of ratifications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 187 to date, a number never before achieved by any other human rights convention.

On 30 September, we marked the sixth anniversary of the World Summit for Children. That Summit was the first international conference of the 1990s and reaffirmed that the rights of the child and the safeguarding of those rights by States and individuals help in achieving the physical, psychological and intellectual development of children, enabling them subsequently to make a positive contribution to creating a healthy society in which the rights of individuals and communities are respected.

Because of the ongoing efforts made by international and national bodies, the rights of children have now become the human rights that are most likely to be implemented in practice. These rights have today become a tangible reality, as borne out by increases in basic social services, such as health and education, as well as by the establishment of legal and legislative structures at the national level. Likewise, people in government who can serve children in the future have been educated in this regard.

Egypt quickly ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. President Mubarak also declared a decade for the protection of the Egyptian child, from 1990 to the end of the millennium. We are making enormous efforts to ensure the protection of children, and have set up a national council for mothers and children, responsible for establishing general policies as well as a national plan to guarantee that children are a part of all Government planning. We have established specialized children's libraries in various areas and children's health is attended to in schools. Recent media campaigns have promoted mother and child health. Parliament has adopted a new uniform law for children whose provisions are more in keeping with the text of the Convention. Previously, all these matters had been scattered in various laws that were not legally homogeneous, and were incomprehensible to the ordinary citizen and even to lawyers and judges. For the first time, then, Egypt has adopted a law that brings together the various rules and provisions concerning children, from the foetal stage until the child is capable of assuming adult responsibilities.

As we take stock of the situation at mid-decade and see what has been done at the national level, we note that Egypt's actions as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General have been combined with the national cooperation efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund in Cairo to address the question of the provision of drinking water and other services. Positive indicators are mentioned, and in the next five years these will be supplemented with regard to the education of children. We continue to face challenges and obstacles, particularly in certain tribal areas. Our immunization campaigns will continue along with efforts in the area of family planning and sanitation.

In conclusion, I appeal for the protection of children and for the rights and physical integrity of the child to be guaranteed, especially in armed conflicts. We condemn military actions which subject citizens to death or displacement. The children who come to mind are those in the occupied Arab territories, Palestine and Lebanon, who have been killed or have been victims of acts violence, as well as many others who are victims of armed aggression. I would also like to mention African children who suffer from poverty and famine as well as from the absence of peace. I call upon all States to support the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa to strengthen development in that continent. These measures should be implemented, as they are of primary importance to ensure respect for African children.

Mr. Hahm (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by extending our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on mid-decade progress on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256). My delegation believes that the report presents a clear and comprehensive overview of the situation of children worldwide at this important halfway mark and suggests future actions to be pursued during the second half of the decade in order to reach the goals for the year 2000.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its valuable role in the follow-up process, for its strong leadership in developing a national plan of action and for monitoring the progress towards the goals. Furthermore, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the various non-governmental organizations, including the UNICEF national committees, which have striven with great commitment and dedication to the global agenda for children.

The report indicates an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals for children in most countries. Two of the more noteworthy accomplishments relate to control of preventable diseases and the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a critical step in creating an environment for the protection of children. All of us here today should be proud of these mid-term achievements.

Despite these positive developments, we still face many of the same challenges today as we did five years ago and even as far back as 50 years ago. Tragically, tens of thousands of children continue to die every day from malnutrition and diseases, which are preventable. The report states that about 12 million children under the age of five die annually and that about 70 per cent of these deaths are due to preventable disease. Most of the children who are perishing from preventable disease and malnutrition are in developing countries, particularly South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Even more disturbing is that millions of these children exist in an environment where fear and turmoil are a part of their daily lives; many of these children are recruited as combatants in regional conflicts.

In addition to basic survival issues, another critical area at this mid-term review time, though it is not explicitly expressed as a goal, is gender disparities. It is disheartening to note that little or no major improvements have been made to remedy gender disparities both in school enrolment and illiteracy in developing countries, and that the situation with regard to the commercial exploitation of children and reports of child abuse worldwide has been deteriorating.

As we stand on the threshold of the next millennium, we must confront the question of how individual Governments and the international community as a whole should address these challenges for the coming years. First and foremost, bringing an end to the needless deaths of some 8 million children each year must continue to be a key priority in the years ahead. To that end, the international community should assist developing countries in the effort to reduce the mortality rate of children.

Given the direct and vital role that women play in child welfare and given the vulnerability of girls, a framework for women's equality and empowerment should be more actively applied to the mainstreaming of gender issues in both national and international strategies for the next half-decade.

In light of the vital role played by non-governmental organizations and the private sector in children's advocacy, raising public and political awareness, mobilizing resources and fostering more active and systemic involvement should be encouraged at all levels, from developing and implementing strategies for the second half-decade to monitoring and assessing their progress.

Another issue which my delegation considers of vital importance is the collection of indicators and statistical data, the tools with which to quantify progress not only at this mid-decade point but also during future assessments. The unfortunate reality is that we are generally faced with constraints, such as data limitation and unavailability, a lack of reliable sources, inappropriate measuring techniques and the misclassification of data. My delegation firmly believes that improvements in collecting data and measuring indicators and statistics are crucial if we are accurately to assess the progress of work toward our common goals.

During the past five years, there has been growing recognition that working towards the goals established for children naturally contributes to the attainment of other social and economic goals. It is evident that the series of global conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations during the 1990s following the World Summit for Children has consolidated and broadened the notion of human-centred development, and the environmental and human rights agenda. Based on this encouraging experience, my delegation would like to reaffirm its commitment to children and to forging an international partnership in completing the tasks before us by the year 2000. It is the profound hope of my delegation that the articles of the Declaration of the World Summit will become a reality in the not-too-distant future.

Ms. Thahim (Pakistan): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. We find the report useful, objective and forthright. We would also like to express appreciation to the relevant United Nations agencies for their role not only in helping to bring this document about, but also in the Summit's follow-up process.

We commend the non-governmental organizations for their genuine efforts and valuable contributions towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Summit. The actions of these non-governmental organizations in the follow-up to the Summit did not represent merely a conventional struggle. It was a crusade on behalf of children. A great deal of credit for whatever we have accomplished at the mid-decade point goes to these organizations.

Pakistan takes great pride in having been one of the initiators of the World Summit for Children. We will continue our steadfast commitment to the noble goals of the Summit. In Pakistan, the Government has embarked upon many programmes aimed at accomplishing the goals set by the Summit. We have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We are addressing child-related issues with a high degree of urgency and seriousness. We have succeeded in creating widespread awareness in all sections of society about the needs and rights of our children. Laws concerning children's rights have been strengthened. Institutional mechanisms for the protection of children, such as special committees for prosecuting violators of labour laws, have been established. In the health sector, we have eradicated the scourge of guinea worm disease, dramatically reduced the number of deaths caused by measles and achieved near-universal salt iodization.

In Pakistan, as in many developing countries, a number of major tasks remain to be accomplished. Infant and maternal mortality levels continue to be unacceptably high. We are considering an optimal strategy at the national level for overcoming the grave impediments of resource constraints, in the form of a set of measures to ensure optimal utilization of limited resources. This will have to be complemented by a pool of trained and motivated staff. We are, therefore, focusing on this aspect. Despite our achievements, further attention needs to be given to health care by strengthening existing services.

We believe that at the national level, powerful legislation, socio-economic reforms and education are effective measures to achieve the goals of the Summit. It is gratifying to note that in the process of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the most rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history. As of July 1996, the Convention had been ratified by 187 countries. This is a remarkable achievement. We hope that it will assist the international community in accomplishing the goals of the Summit.

The Secretary-General has rightly observed that the test of all international declarations and plans is the degree to which they are implemented by national Governments and all sections of society. We would like to add that such declarations have to be matched by a collective commitment to concrete actions.

At the mid-decade point, we note that the most striking progress in the context of child survival has been made in the areas of immunization coverage, the control of diarrhoeal diseases, polio, guinea worm and iodine-deficiency disorders, and the promotion of breast-feeding. Accomplishment of these goals has been made possible by concerted efforts by Governments, communities, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. We must now sustain the progress, particularly in the field of immunization. Special attention should be focused on sub-Saharan Africa, in view of the fact that 14 out of the 18 countries with less than 50 per cent child immunization coverage are in this region.

We are acutely concerned that the progress on malnutrition, maternal mortality, sanitation and girls' education has been weak, uncertain or even negligible. The prevalence of child malnutrition is disturbingly high in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, as is maternal mortality. Progress in providing clean water and sanitation and in ensuring that all children are able to attend school is painfully slow. There is yet another area that gives us cause for deep concern. While under-five mortality has declined in all regions, the pace of progress has been too slow to meet the end-of-decade goal, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

While analysing the diversity in progress towards achieving the Summit's goals, the Secretary-General has observed that given their historical background, differing levels of development, existing levels of capacity and other initial conditions, countries and regions face different degrees of challenges in meeting the goals set at the global level.

We do not disagree with the Secretary-General's observations regarding the causes of diversity in progress. We would, however, like to caution against brushing aside the perpetual inability of countries and regions to meet the goals set at a global level by simply explaining the realities on the ground. If the tragedies of under-five mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which together account for three fourths of all under-five deaths in the world, continue to defy national strategies, the situation cannot be ignored. It calls for urgent and concerted action. The United Nations Children's Fund will have to intensify its efforts. The international community will have to help the developing countries in capacity-building to formulate and implement effective programmes.

Today the survival, protection and development of children are threatened in varying degrees in many parts of the world, particularly in the developing countries. It is the common responsibility of the international community to ensure that all of us have the opportunity to bring up healthy, educated, protected and secure children. Let us not forget the plight of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflict.

Children represent our future. They deserve a place at the top of our national and international agendas. After all, the dream of a happy and secure world cannot come true as long as there is a single child living in misery and despair in any part of the globe. Pakistan fully endorses the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly should consider holding a special session in five years' time to examine how far the world's nations have fulfilled their promises for children. The year 2000 would be the right time to assess our achievements. Let us pledge today that we will fulfil our promises for children.

Finally, while pledging to fulfil our promises for children, let us also reflect on the issues and address some pertinent questions. Why is it that serious problems continue to defy national strategies in the poor countries? How do we tackle these stubborn obstacles in the way of global development? The answer to the first question is provided by the fact that there is a massive mismatch between the magnitude of requirements and the amount of resources available to the concerned countries to enable them to take concrete and effective measures. The answer to the second question is that the international community needs to tackle these problems with adequate resources, with a high degree of determination and perseverance, and on a war footing.

Mr. Ahmed (India): Let me first of all compliment the Secretary-General for his exhaustive report on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256).

We have noted with satisfaction that the area in which the most progress has been made is the control of preventable diseases, specifically the promotion of services such as immunization, control of iodine-deficiency disorders, eradication of polio and guinea worm disease, and protection of breastfeeding. It is equally heartening to note the marked progress in creating an environment for the protection of childhood by the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that access to safe water has improved considerably.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, it is a matter of great concern for all of us that in relation to some goals there has not been significant progress. The weakest areas are in the fields of malnutrition, maternal mortality, adult literacy and the spread of sanitation services. We agree with the Secretary-General that more needs to be done in pursuit of these goals; the challenges for the rest of the decade will be to improve our record. While the World Summit for Children had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating new partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations, donors, the media, civil society and international organizations, it is of paramount importance that the newly created partnership be strengthened and expanded. We have given our commitment to the children and we have to fulfil our promises. We welcome the call of the Secretary-General for the General Assembly to consider holding a special session in five years' time to examine the extent to which the world's nations have fulfilled their promises.

It is my privilege to speak a few words to this body, on behalf of the Government of India, in review of our own progress in achieving mid-decade goals. India's commitment to the care of children since our independence is enshrined in our Constitution. As a follow-up to this commitment, the Government of India adopted a National Policy for Children in 1974 with a view to providing adequate services to children, both before and after birth and through the period of growth, to ensure their full physical, mental, child-health, nutritional and educational progress. Following the Declaration adopted by 71 Heads of State or Government at the World Summit for Children, the Government of India set itself the task of achieving major goals in health, water and sanitation, nutrition, education, removal of gender bias and improved protection for children in especially difficult circumstances.

India is a signatory to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for implementing it. With India's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a rights-oriented approach to children and development is gaining importance and will henceforth form the basis of Government strategy to achieve major goals of child development.

In the health sector, the goal of reduction of mortality and morbidity could be achieved to the extent of 95 per cent, leaving a gap of 5 per cent to be covered. This is an enormous task, given the sizeable proportion of India's population under age 14, whose number, it is estimated, will be 305 million by the year 2001.

As regards the goal of providing universal access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation, we have so far been able to provide 89.3 per cent of the habitations with at least one source of drinking water. Today, there are less than 1,000 villages with no source of drinking water. Pilot projects for fluorosis control have been started in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Gujarat, where incidences of fluorosis have been reported. Access to sanitary means of disposal of human wastes includes 19.2 per cent of rural households.

On nutrition, 15 major states have reported coverage of more than 80 per cent of infants receiving measles vaccinations, and getting their first vitamin A dose of 100,000 international units. More than 67 per cent of edible salt at the production level is iodized. It is reported that oral rehydration therapy has become popular in over 80 per cent of our villages.

The Government of India's National Nutrition Policy, adopted in 1993, is yielding definite results towards solving the problem of malnutrition, both through direct nutrition intervention for especially vulnerable groups and through various conditions of improved nutrition.

As regards education, the 1986 National Policy on Education and the 1992 Programme of Action envision education as fundamental to the all-around development of children, and stipulate free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality for all children up to 14 years of age before the turn of the century. the National Policy on Education also emphasizes universal enrolment of children. The current status indicates that an incremental approach to primary education is being followed in 125 districts in an estimated 15,000 out of 750,000 primary schools. The All-India Educational Survey of 1993 reported improvement in primary schools' gross enrolment ratio by 42 per cent overall and by 7.5 per cent among girls, over a period of seven years from 1986 to 1993.

The attendance rate for girls in rural areas has increased by 12 per cent over the past five years. As a result of the increased attendance rate in rural areas over the past five years, 36 million more girls of the age group of 5 through 14 are now going to primary schools in India.

To achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education, a number of programmes have been introduced, such as Operation Blackboard, Minimum Levels of Learning, the Scheme of Operationalizing, Microplanning and the Scheme of Non-formal Education. These programmes aim at bringing about substantial improvement in the facilities and quality of education in primary schools, along with improvement in the existing levels of learning achievement of children.

In order to remove gender bias and provide improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, a National Plan of Action for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Decade of the Girl Child 1991-2000 is under implementation. Non-governmental organizations are being encouraged to start non-institutional services. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 is more vigorously applied, as child labour persists because of socio-economic compulsions.

Our achievements notwithstanding, the tasks ahead of us are daunting. However, we intend to address them frontally and with vigour. An optimal utilization and mobilization of internal and external resources are being attempted. Our efforts in the field of child development are testimony to India's commitment to the cause of children. Our actions are aimed at child-centred development in which children are not just recipients of the benefits of services and programmes but the focus of development itself.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to urge the international community to collaborate more closely with national Governments in the successful implementation of the strategies drawn up with a view to keeping our promises to the children of the world. I wish to extend a note of appreciation for the help given us by many United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, in the tasks we have set ourselves, and to express the hope that such cooperation may continue.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Six years ago the World Summit for Children was successfully convened. Today, we are pleased to see that all countries have worked very hard to turn the commitments they made at that Summit into reality, with encouraging results achieved in improving the survival, protection and development of children. This can be attributed first and foremost to the political will of all Governments and to their commitment to children, as well as to the rapid entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, as an international legal instrument, has provided a legal framework for the actions taken by countries. In addition, effective international cooperation on behalf of children has also played a positive role. The Chinese delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the important role it has played during the past six years.

China is now earnestly fulfilling the commitments it made at the Summit. Our legislative bodies have formulated and approved a host of laws and legal regulations on the survival, protection and development of children, on the basis of our Constitution. A fairly complete legal system for the protection of the rights and interests of children has taken shape. In 1992, the Chinese Government officially made public the Outlines of the Plan on the Development of Chinese Children in the 1990s. The State Council has set up a Committee on Women and Children, which oversees the implementation of the Outlines.

Thanks to the unremitting efforts of the Chinese Government, the basic conditions of Chinese children have markedly improved, and most of the indicators have reached the mid-decade goals. In the field of health care China has now established a health-care system for women and children suited to our conditions. The three-tier health-care and disease-prevention network in both urban and rural areas covers children throughout the country. The wide and planned use of vaccines for children has greatly reduced the incidence of vaccine-preventable disease as well as the rate of mortality. It is expected that the goal of eliminating polio will be reached by the year 2000. In 1995 the mortality rate for Chinese babies and children under five was 36.4 per thousand and 44.5 per thousand, respectively, down about 27 per cent as compared to 1991.

In the field of education, the Chinese Government has always made child education a top priority and has yearly increased its input. At present, the enrolment rate for school-age children is 98.5 per cent and that of girls 98.2 per cent, both surpassing the mid-term targets. The Hope Project initiated throughout the country in 1989 to help children who cannot afford schooling has kept in school 1,250,000 children who would otherwise have dropped out.

China attaches great importance to the protection of handicapped children and has tried very hard to create favourable conditions for their survival and development. By the end of 1995, 360,000 child patients suffering from the sequelae of polio have improved their physical functions after undergoing operations, and more than 60,000 deaf children have regained their hearing. The enrolment rate for school-age handicapped children has risen from 20 per cent in 1990 to 60 per cent today, and up to 80 per cent in economically advanced regions. Far from being content with those achievements, the Chinese Government is making and will continue to make even greater efforts in this regard.

The mid-decade review should both evaluate progress and identify existing problems. From a global point of view, among the many target areas set at the Summit the response to some remains weak, such as reducing malnutrition, cutting down the maternal mortality rate and increasing adult literacy. There is an even greater need for the international community to make special efforts greatly to reduce the mortality rate of children under five. In this connection, the Chinese delegation shares the views of the Secretary-General on the survival, protection and development of children in the next five years and concurs with the recommendations set forth in his report.

The Chinese delegation believes that the international community should concentrate its efforts in the following areas: First, poverty remains the fundamental cause that jeopardizes the survival, protection and development of children. Poverty in families and communities has denied many children access to health care and education. Poverty is also one of the causes of child labour and prostitution. Unless poverty is eliminated, the promotion of the survival, protection and development of children will be no more than empty words. Therefore, the international community, and the United Nations in particular, should give top priority to the elimination of poverty in promoting the cause of children.

Secondly, one of the main goals set at the World Summit for Children was to put children in conflict and war-torn areas under special protection. In recent years, some regions have seen constant armed conflicts and wars. As a result, there are large numbers of children who need such protection. The international community, and especially the relevant United Nations agencies, should make special efforts to provide these unfortunate children with timely protection. The United Nations should also take effective measures to protect the basic rights and interests of innocent children in countries under sanctions.

Thirdly, protecting children from harmful information and materials is one of the main elements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately, the culture of violence, murder, pornography and drugs running rampant in some countries has victimized a large number of children. What is more, this culture is being extended to other regions of the world, posing a threat to the physical and mental health of their children. Therefore, it is imperative to implement the aforementioned provisions of the Convention by stopping the production and dissemination of poisonous cultural products and replacing them with healthy information and materials.

Fourthly, the question of resources is the key to the attainment of the end-decade goals. The 20/20 Initiative has its positive aspects and should therefore be promoted. However, in order to get additional resources to help developing countries reach the end-decade goals, efforts must be made to reverse the present downward trend in official development assistance. To take back the commitments made at the Children's Summit would mean cheating children.

Fifthly, sub-Saharan Africa faces even more difficulties in trying to meet the mid-decade goals. The United Nations agencies that provide development assistance, and especially UNICEF, should pay particular attention to this and the South Asian regions and give them more financial, technical and personnel assistance so as to help them catch up with the rest of the world during the next five years.

Nothing in my life would make me happier than to see the smiling faces of children. I sincerely wish that children everywhere can live a happy life.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The 1990 World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are historic landmarks in the consolidation of international efforts to establish the political and legal basis for the advancement of children. Ukraine fully supports the conclusion drawn by the

Secretary-General in his report on the Progress at Mid-Decade on Implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children:

> "The World Summit for Children therefore not only elevated children to a new prominence on the international agenda, but provided a launching pad for a regeneration of the international movement against poverty in all its social and economic dimensions." *(A/51/256, para. 3)*

I think this is a good opportunity to extend our gratitude to the group of countries — namely, Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden — for its timely initiative to convene a summit devoted to children.

The States signatories to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and to the relevant Plan of Action have recognized that there was no other task that deserved greater priority than the protection and development of children, who will be responsible for the further survival, stability and progress of human civilization. In our view, the decisions adopted at the World Summit for Children have been tested in the period since, and it has been proved that we are on the right track.

Today's meeting of the General Assembly is very important for evaluating progress on the implementation of the provisions of the above-mentioned documents. From the report of the Secretary-General we can conclude that care of children occupies an important place in the domestic policies of many governments. For its part, Ukraine is making every effort to fulfil its obligations under the Plan of Action. Several months ago, in his letter to the Secretary-General, the President of Ukraine pledged his full support to the efforts of the United Nations to carry out this mid-decade review of progress since the World Summit for Children, emphasizing that the review could become an important basis for further activities directed at the improvement of the situation of children.

In 1991, Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus taking on new commitments to create an adequate legislative basis for the social protection of families with children. Since then, a number of practical steps have been taken to improve the situation of children in Ukraine. Within the last two years, national programmes on family planning and the children of Ukraine have been approved. An analytical overview, "Children in the conditions of the transition period", has been prepared.

The national programme on children is aimed at creating favourable conditions for: the development of children; ensuring their legal and social protection; preventing diseases; providing the most reliable means of medical care and treatment to children; implementing radical measures to prevent infectious diseases; eliminating malnutrition among children; and implementing measures to prevent crime, drug abuse, alcoholism and smoking among children. To further improve efforts at the national level to implement the provisions of the Convention and the World Declaration, a special inter-agency commission has recently been established.

I have mentioned just these few examples to show that, in spite of the serious economic difficulties Ukraine has experienced during the current transition period, state and government bodies continue to undertake appropriate social measures to preserve the nation's genetic fund, in which the future of Ukraine resides.

Assessment of the mid-decade achievements gives us grounds for some optimism. At the same time, it reveals spheres in which no progress has yet been made. The continued deterioration in the condition of children in many regions of the world is a matter of special concern. Specifically, the problem of preventing and eradicating the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography requires urgent and effective measures at national, regional and international levels. The First World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm this past August, was an important and timely step in this direction.

It is the view of our delegation that such United Nations institutions as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others should continue to play a key role in this regard. I would like to commend the efforts of UNICEF in my country. We also welcome the recent decision to establish a regional UNICEF office for Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, with liaison offices in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow.

The current discussion of the Secretary-General's report shows that much work still has to be done. We, therefore, have to undertake additional joint efforts to find new solutions if we want to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children by the year 2000. The more we care about our children today, the more confident we can be about their future, and hence about the future of each country, every region and the world as a whole.

We should always remember that there were times when we too were children, with our dreams and the expectations of our parents. There is a famous proverb, which I believe is not unique to my country: as you sow, so shall your reap. So, as the Secretary-General rightly stated yesterday morning, let us put children first. Let us do everything possible to meet the expectations of the world's children.

Ms. Smolcic (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The World Summit for Children is part of a trend to give prominence to the cause of children in the international political agenda. The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action mark our commitment to pursue the action already initiated to achieve a series of development goals and strategies for children in the decade of the 1990s.

We believe that the results achieved at mid-decade should sustain the momentum of the process in favour of children, and that a comprehensive approach is needed, since there is inevitably a close link to development, human rights, the environment and population.

To prepare its plan of action on social policy and in the areas of education, children in particularly difficult circumstances, nutrition, women and health, Uruguay set up a coordinating team which has enjoyed the technical and financial support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), assistance from the technical cooperation programme of the Planning and Budget Office of the Presidency of the Republic, the Inter-American Development Bank, and leaders and officials of all the sectors involved.

Because of the evolution of its social policies on children, Uruguay stands out in the regional context. Historically speaking, the consolidation of a democratic Uruguay and of republican principles has been linked to the development of its educational system and the social protection of children and youth.

In the field of education, although the literacy rate in Uruguay stands at 97 per cent, the Government of Uruguay has embarked on the implementation of an overall educational reform without precedent this century, whose priorities include: strengthening the quality of education at the various levels; expanding the coverage of pre-school education to include children aged four to five years, resulting in the enrolment of 25,000 new pupils by the year 2000; restructuring class schedules for secondary education so as to increase the time students spend in educational establishments; and redesigning the education available in the professional technical field by remodelling university education to meet the needs of the labour market and create new careers.

With regard to children's health, the early development and maturity attained in the institutionalization of social services have led to great progress as can be seen in the indicators on infant survival.

The main goals of the Ministry of Public Health are to increase the rates of breastfeeding and substantially reduce infant mortality, which fell last year to 16 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Similarly, one of Uruguay's key objectives in the field of health is to improve the mental, physical and emotional well-being of children, which is already reflected in the reduction of infant mortality. However, one problem to be resolved is the fact that only 15 per cent of Uruguayan children are breastfed up to six months of age. This therefore affects a child's survival, development and growth. Thus the challenge is to make a reality of the target that 75 per cent of children should have six months of natural breastfeeding by the year 2000. This will be the most effective ... weapon in reducing ... the infant mortality rate to 10 per 1,000 in a country whose health conditions ensure a quality of life that is outstanding in the region. The Human Development Index calculated by the United Nations Development Programme ranks Uruguay thirty-second in the world and third in Latin America.

Promoting baby-friendly hospitals which, in turn, promote maternal breastfeeding has received special mention by UNICEF. In this regard, Uruguay will take part in the First Southern Cone Congress on Breastfeeding that will take place in Santa Catarina, Brazil, from 26 to 30 October this year. Its aim is the signature of a letter of commitment for the establishment of a uniform policy on incentives for the whole region. This document will be submitted to the First World Congress on Breastfeeding to be held in Thailand in December.

Uruguay undertook to implement the goals agreed at the World Summit for Children and prepared its plan of action for children. According to data provided by UNICEF, our country ranks among those in which most of the mid-decade goals have been achieved with a high level of sectoral technical commitment. Thus the status of these goals is positive in general. However, rapid changes in Uruguayan society have given rise to new situations and emerging problems which call for new methodologies and there is therefore a new need to protect the population faced with issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and AIDS.

In accordance with the programme of the Government of Uruguay, the main national objectives are geared to a development strategy based on democratic consolidation, strengthening equality and social integration, and a fair distribution of choices and opportunities among all Uruguayan citizens in a society from which no one is excluded. This means creating effective equality of opportunity from the beginning of people's lives and opening new horizons for young people, broadening avenues for their incorporation into the labour market, creating new spheres of activity for the development of their personality and affording them options for their participation in society.

Uruguay is committed to working steadfastly to eliminate obstacles that make it difficult to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children, so that future generations of boys and girls can enjoy decent living standards and our societies attain greater solidarity and equality.

Mrs. Flórez Prida (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My Government endorses the conclusion contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/256) that the goals established at the World Summit for Children have had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating a new level of activity for children around the world.

The progress made is undeniable. The results obtained in child survival goals such as immunization coverage, control of diarrhoeal diseases and the promotion of breastfeeding are enough for us to conclude that the effort made has been worthwhile.

However, we do not think that we should boast when there has been little or no progress made towards the fulfilment of goals identified in such fundamental areas as infant mortality in children under five, malnutrition or the education of girls. Nor can we overlook unequal progress towards such goals that has been made between the different regions, as well as between the different countries within these regions.

It is true that political will in the mobilization and empowerment of all resources in pursuit of such goals has not always been equal at the national level. However, we believe that, in most cases, the basic limitations have been largely caused by structural factors requiring action outside the scope of a specific Government. To aim at the overall development of children without the overall development of the social and material environment where they grow up would make no sense at all.

National efforts must be accompanied by a new philosophy of international solidarity that would generate new resources to help developing countries implement their national Summit follow-up plans. While in one group of countries, government actions in education can focus on such goals as how to ensure their students universal access to computer technology, in a large group of nations, Governments cannot even provide notebooks and pencils required for the functioning of the primary education system.

Cuba wishes very especially to recognize the concrete results attained in inter-organ collaboration within the United Nations system in fulfilling its goals for children, in which the leadership of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been undeniable. In complying with the agreements adopted at the World Summit for Children, Cuba has a national programme of action that operates as an instrument of social policy, supporting the programmes carried out by the country in the overall development of its children. In implementing our national programme, we have had the constant support of the system's bodies and, very particularly, the contribution of agencies involved in children's well-being and health, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF.

For more than three decades, the Government and organizations of Cuban society have focused their efforts and energies on redressing the serious setbacks that have historically affected its children's living conditions, survival, development and well-being. These efforts have covered all areas of social life, in particular education and health.

Most of the goals set by the World Summit for Children for the year 2000 have already been attained or surpassed by Cuba. This is particularly significant when we consider that it was precisely the years following the

Summit that have been the most difficult in the entire economic history of the island. Our country had to come to grips with the sudden break in economic relations, trade and forms of productive supplementation that had been established over decades with the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This was accompanied by the tightening of the United States blockade, inclusive of food and medicine for our children.

The country's purchasing power dropped by approximately 80 per cent between 1989 and 1993. This will give an idea of the scope of the efforts undertaken to maintain and even improve some indices of the well-being of Cuban children. In Cuba, 97.6 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 are currently in school and the infant mortality rate has been under 10 per 1,000 live births for four consecutive years; this rate was 9.4 in 1995.

The premise that a child's happiness is worth more than all the riches of the world has guided my Government's policy, and not only towards Cuban children. More than 15,000 Cuban doctors have rendered their services, at no cost, in dozens of countries. Furthermore, thousands of children from all over the world have studied in our schools and colleges. More than 10,000 children, victims of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, have undergone treatment in our country.

Cuba supports the convening of a General Assembly special session within five years to review the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action for children and to set the goals and strategies that will guide our collective action in the first years of the coming millennium.

May I conclude this statement by reaffirming my Government's commitment to the overall development of children. This goal, as has been the case over the past three decades, will continue to determine the design of policies and programmes in all spheres in my country. The well-being of children constitutes an essential value of Cuban culture.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): In 1990, the World Summit for Children adopted a World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for its implementation. The Declaration presented us with a challenge and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children. The Plan of Action identified seven major goals relating to the survival, health, nutrition, education, and protection of children for fulfilment by the year 2000.

Leaders from every corner of the world who were gathered in this very Hall declared a solemn commitment to build a world order that would safeguard the most precious resource of the human race — its children. Referring to the Summit, the 1990 Report on the State of the World's Children stated that

> "A major renewal of effort to protect the lives and the development of children, and to end the worst aspects of poverty, would ... be the greatest long-term investment which the human race could make in its future economic prosperity, political stability, and environmental integrity." *(The State of the World's Children 1990, OUP, p. 4)*

This statement continues to hold true today and, indeed, it will for years to come.

Immediately after the World Summit, countries started to translate their commitments into action.

In the Philippines, the Plan of Action for the Filipino Children in the 1990s and Beyond, a product of cooperative efforts of the Government, non-governmental organizations and other members of the civil society, was put in place. It was my country's response to the Summit's call to put children first in the development agenda. Our commitments to and goals for Filipino children were made part of the country's Medium-term Development Plan and of our Social Reform Agenda.

At this juncture, I wish to make special mention of the valuable assistance and contribution of the United Nations Children's Fund in our efforts to implement our Plan of Action. Our thanks also go to our development partners and to the other members of the United Nations system of operational activities for development.

Six years later, the Secretary-General reports that in most countries there is an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of the goals. However, his report also acknowledges the lack of significant progress in some areas, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia.

Our main challenge today is the achievement of the Summit goals by the year 2000. There is now an even greater need for all members of the international community, the United Nations system, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, to work together for the world's children. Countries that are in danger of missing even the mid-decade goals by the end of this century — such as those in sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries in Asia and Latin America — deserve our special attention and assistance. The Philippines joins others in making an appeal to the donor community to reverse the trend in the flow of official development assistance. In places where progress has been significant, our challenge is to sustain such gains. We cannot afford to slow down, because children cannot wait. We express the sincere hope that the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will give a stronger shield of protection to children affected by armed conflict, exploitation, abuse and neglect. At any given time, our commitment to children must transcend political or any other considerations not related to their survival, protection or development.

Today, the Philippines recommits itself to the goals and objectives of the World Summit for Children. We shall continue to do our utmost for Filipino children. Within our limited capability, we stand ready to cooperate with others.

The 1990 World Summit for Children set specific, measurable and time-bound goals. To enable us to gauge our efforts at the end of the decade, the Philippines recommends that a special session of the General Assembly be held in the year 2001 to review the status of the Summit goals.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. It is particularly gratifying for me to participate in this debate on this item, which has always been a matter of great interest and commitment for the Government of Argentina.

The World Summit for Children, held six years ago, was a historic landmark in the world's progress for the cause of children. At that time, it was our conviction that we were inaugurating an era in which the concerns of children would acquire unprecedented political significance. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and its rapid, almost universal ratification by 187 States are events which we welcome with real satisfaction.

The Secretary-General's report notes encouraging achievements in the fields of health, nutrition, education and sanitation. We note that three out of five countries are about to achieve the general goal of increasing the child survival rate or have a good chance of doing so. The report emphasizes important achievements in the area of immunization and the virtual elimination of the usual endemic diseases. Iodized salt has reached 1.5 billion persons to prevent such diseases, saving 1 million children per year by increasing the family's capacity to treat dehydration.

However despite all these efforts, there are discouraging indicators which show that there has been virtually no progress since 1990 in the area of infant nutrition, maternal mortality and sanitation. It is clear to us that these efforts should go hand in hand with a strong emphasis on education — the only way to eradicate these serious problems completely. To achieve the goals set for the year 2000, we will need to continue to mobilize resources on all levels: national budgets, the private sector, civil society, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In the last six years, Argentina has consolidated expanded programmes of immunization for all children under seven years of age, distributing throughout the country 22 million doses of vaccines annually. We have also continued the second stage of eliminating neonatal tetanus by vaccinating women between 12 and 49 years of age in the provinces most at risk, with a coverage of 900,000 persons in 1995. The consolidation of the programme to eradicate measles, which began in 1992 with a massive inoculation of more than 10 million children and youths between one and 14 years of age and the establishment of a monitoring system for certain diseases, have led to a drastic reduction in cases, which went from 5,000 to 8 laboratory-confirmed cases in 1995.

The Argentine Government is extremely concerned over the growing number of incidents throughout the world related to the sale of minors, traffic in organs, prostitution and child pornography. We appeal to the international community to adopt all necessary measures, including administrative or legislative measures, to eradicate these crimes and convict the criminals.

With the support of many members of the Latin American and Caribbean group, my country took steps in 1994 to prepare a binding legal instrument to fight the traffic in minors. The report on this matter submitted in 1995 by the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime pointed to a series of specific situations and to the growth of this phenomenon. The responses by Governments to the Secretary-General's questions have been in favour of preparing a binding instrument in this field. In our view, it is important for the Secretary-General to continue to obtain the views of States on the preparation of such a convention on the international traffic in minors.

We subscribe with enthusiasm to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, and we congratulate the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden for the initiative and the results of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Based on the contribution of these international events, we wish to emphasize the need to highlight very particularly in describing the present situation not only the poverty and abandonment of victimized children, but also the moral degradation, the perversion and the gross indecency of the criminals who abuse them.

I wish to congratulate all relevant organizations of the United Nations for their part in these successes: the United Nations Children's Fund, the organ directly responsible for children, for its characteristic efficiency; the World Health Organization for its fundamental role in preparing the goals relating to health and its support to countries for the attainment of these goals; and the many non-governmental organizations of Argentina and the rest of the world.

Finally, I wish to state that we believe that the General Assembly should consider the possibility of holding, five years hence, a special session to review again the scope of our promises and achievements.

Mrs. Vargas (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: In the 1980s, the report entitled "The State of the World's Children" told us that 250,000 children died every week, a vast majority of them from preventable diseases; that millions barely survived in terrible sanitary conditions; and that the increase in malnutrition of millions of children, especially in developing countries, was alarming. In the course of that decade, approximately 2 million children died the victims of war, and between 4 million and 5 million suffered physical disabilities. Unfortunately, during the same decade the continuation of the debt crisis in the developing world meant that the countries of the South transferred $50 billion a year to the countries of the North and that an average of only 12 per cent of government expenditures were allotted to basic health care.

We believe that we have to emphasize these facts again although they are well known to us all, since they give us a partial picture of the situation at the end of the 1980s. It was in precisely this disconcerting panorama that we were faced with which under the auspices of the United Nations the historic decision was taken to hold the World Summit for Children. In September 1990 more than 159 countries met to adopt a commitment for the children of the world.

Today we are gathered in this General Assembly Hall to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade following that Summit. The question that must be asked is, what have we done to change this panorama in these five years? What have we achieved at the national and the international level to implement the goals we set at the World Summit for Children?

My delegation is participating in this debate not only to express what we have done in Nicaragua since the World Summit but also because of our interest in and concern about the depressing situation of the world's children, particularly in developing countries. Like most other developing countries, Nicaragua entered the 1990s in a situation where our children still had many unmet needs. The war that Nicaragua suffered in the 1980s left a devastating mark on children who, as has been the case in other situations, were the innocent victims. This meant that more than 190,000 children were affected directly, including those displaced, orphaned, dead, wounded, maimed, kidnapped and repatriated. These are some of the effects of war that we are still trying to overcome.

The commitment that we undertook at the 1990 World Summit therefore represented a challenge that we had to accept in extremely difficult circumstances, since we entered the decade in the midst of a deep economic crisis with reduced resources, an oppressive external debt and great demands and needs for social services. At the same time, we have had to fulfil certain necessary obligations to rehabilitate our economy. These conditions, as has been the case in many countries, as recognized in the Secretary-General's report, have had a negative effect on our social indicators.

Nevertheless, despite our economic and financial difficulties, our Government has always decided in favour of complying with the goals set at the Summit. As part of this commitment, in 1990 Nicaragua established the National Commission for the Protection of Nicaraguan Children, which is responsible for coordinating and regulating educational matters through governmental and non-governmental initiatives relating to children. In 1992, we established the National Plan of Action for Human Development, Children and Youth for the period 1992-2000, with a view to initiating actions to alleviate and reduce poverty. During these five years, through national days of health, we have achieved 100 per cent immunization coverage for tuberculosis, 90 per cent for poliomyelitis and an average of 75 per cent for diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, which means that, little by little, we are reaching the goals set in these fields.

Nicaragua is also a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, pursuant to its provisions, submitted its first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May this year. In that report, Nicaragua recognized the difficulties faced by Nicaraguan children. The Committee also prepared a number of recommendations that our Government is studying with great interest, especially those that pertain to the urgent need for legal reform to benefit children and to recognize the rights of boys and girls in my country. In this connection, we can state that on 4 July 1996 the President of Nicaragua, Ms. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, submitted to the National Assembly for discussion a draft code on children and adolescents, which incorporates a new legal approach which would legally guarantee attention to and comprehensive protection of children and adolescents in Nicaragua.

We have read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General; we can see that some positive steps have been taken at mid-decade and that, while progress varies from region to region, important progress has been achieved worldwide, especially in the areas of immunization, prevention and the treatment of communicable diseases. We can also note that in the field of education, as the report emphasizes, progress has been made in many countries. As is evident from the report, during these five years, significant progress has been achieved worldwide on institutional aspects. We can say today that most of the countries that participated in the World Summit have created commissions for children and have prepared national programmes or plans, and that the Convention on the Rights of the Child has already been adopted by more States than any other human rights covenant in history.

However, we are obliged to state that it is of concern that, as can be seen not only in the report of the Secretary-General but also in "The State of the World's Children 1995", so far in the 1990s and despite the achievements made, the harmful situations faced by children are alarming and must receive due attention. We wish to underscore, as the Secretary-General's report states, that this mid-decade review is cause for celebration. But the report also points out areas where policies, strategies, plans of action and even goals need to be adjusted and perfected. In these five years, we have seen that, although we are making advances to reduce infant mortality and to achieve immunization and basic education for our children, other phenomena, some of which are not new to us, compromise the progress achieved. "The State of the World's Children 1995" describes increasingly frequent disasters, such as those suffered by boys and girls in Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Haiti and Bosnia. The statistics which derive from these situations will cast a large shadow on future generations.

According to the report, in recent years, the debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes have reduced real income in many developing countries. With the exception of industrialized countries, many regions of the world are far from achieving the goals. The report recognizes that in Latin America progress has been achieved but the goals are still distant. In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of independent states and the Baltic States, most of the social and economic indicators have become worse in the first half of the decade.

With regard to Africa, the report states that it is the only region in which the total external debt is greater than the gross national product and that low economic growth and insufficient public resources are such that they have had negative implications for children. Those statistics should be of concern to us all.

To these problems, we must add the crisis of the spread of AIDS, from which millions of children suffer throughout the world, the increase in drug addiction and child prostitution, the effects of national disasters and the deterioration of the environment. These are all new phenomena that have set us back and require us constantly to review our goals and objectives.

As can be seen, the activities of the United Nations, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in support of our Governments' efforts to achieve some of the goals of the World Summit for Children have been of great importance for developing countries. Nicaragua attaches special importance to the activities of UNICEF in the field, particularly its coordination work in national emergencies, and its attention to the social sectors at greatest risk, such as the poorest of our populations who live in rural and marginal areas. This, together with the roles played by the resident coordinators and the national authorities, will contribute more effectively to ensuring the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children.

While the Secretary-General's report emphasizes the response given by the United Nations system to implement the objectives of the Summit, we wish to refer to the part of the report that deals with the mobilization of resources. If more efforts are not made to mobilize additional necessary resources, it will be difficult for developing countries to implement the goals. The report recognizes that, on average, at present only 12 per cent of national budgets are given over to basic social services, and that in many cases this shows little sign of improving. The structural adjustment programmes that many developing countries have had to implement have, on the whole, not yet acquired a human face, and very often — if not in most cases — their negative effects are being felt in social service programmes.

That is why my country attaches due importance to strengthening links between national and international institutions and organizations, as well as to promoting a broad mobilization of resources aimed at expanding activities in defence of children and social communication so as to achieve adjustment with a human dimension. We also consider it very important not to reduce funding to UNICEF programmes in Latin America, which would have a detrimental effect on current technical and policy cooperation with UNICEF in the region.

In conclusion, my delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's conclusions that we need to give greater attention to children who are the victims of armed conflict and exploitation. We also support the work of the working group that is preparing a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We agree with the Secretary-General's suggestion that for the rest of the decade we should devote greater efforts to the goal of increasing the protection of children who are in particularly difficult circumstances — circumstances such as those in which the majority of children in developing countries live.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): Allow me first of all to say on behalf of my delegation that we deem the progress made towards achieving the goals set for children's development in the 1990s in the field of health to be promising, and, in some areas, truly impressive. The global trends in the areas of immunization and control of preventable children's diseases are encouraging. The world is on the brink of eradicating both polio and guinea worm disease. With respect to water, the goal set at the World Summit has already been exceeded. However, we also recognize geographical disparities both between and within countries. In the remaining years, the focus in our view should be on readjustments, and on the achievement of goals in the areas of maternal mortality, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Furthermore, we should look at malnutrition, sanitation, the under-five mortality rate, improving the quality of basic education and eliminating the gender gap with regard to access to basic education.

In following up the 20/20 initiative, more emphasis should be given to exploring ways to restructure national budgets, as well as aid budgets, in favour of basic social services. A meeting was held to this effect in Oslo in the spring, hosted by the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands. A follow-up meeting will he held in two years' time at which countries will discuss their experiences.

The recognition of women's rights and needs is a determinant factor for improving children's living conditions and quality of life. Norway is therefore strongly committed to the recognition of women's rights, which should be equal to those of men in all areas of life. This, *inter alia*, means improving women's access to economic resources, and their increased participation in decision-making processes. Recognizing the rights of women to full equality and participation is therefore critical to achieving the World Summit goals.

The gender gap as it affects access to education is particularly serious in Africa. In 1996 Norway decided to support, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a long-term educational programme for girls in Africa. Norway plans to allocate about NKr 150 million to this programme between 1996 and 1999. The programme covers about 30 countries, and the aim is to strengthen the educational system in individual countries, with an emphasis on increasing the proportion of girls who begin and complete primary school.

Norway was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in January 1990, and to ratify it, in January 1991. As an indication of the importance my Government attaches to follow-up of the World Summit for Children, I also wish to note that Norway established a separate Ministry for Children and Family Affairs in January 1991. However, the needs and interests of children and adolescents were high on the political agenda in my country even before that. The Norwegian Government instituted an ombudsman for children as far back as 1981 — the first country in the world to do so. Since then other countries have done the same, drawing on the Norwegian experience. This experience is also being transferred to some developing countries, for instance Nicaragua, in a process facilitated through Norwegian development assistance. The ombudsman for children has a wide mandate and is an independent spokesperson for children in Norway. The ombudsman promotes children's interests vis-à-vis Governments and official authorities as well as the private sector. He is also responsible for calling attention to developments that are harmful to children, and for proposing changes to improve the situation of children.

In response to the Plan of Action and the Convention, and in recognition of our global responsibility towards children, the Norwegian Government has drawn up a strategy for development assistance focusing on children. More attention will be given concentrating our official development assistance on purposes benefitting children directly. Priority areas include children's rights, children's health, children's nutrition, their education, the care and early stimulation of children and vulnerable groups of children.

The child is not an object, but a subject. Each child must be treated with respect for his or her dignity and value. And the responsibility for improving children's lives lies with each one of us, in our daily relationship with and care for children. However, we cannot deny that great responsibility also rests with each Government to establish and pursue policies favourable to children and to their families. I would say that children's living conditions and well-being should be taken as a significant indicator of the general situation in a country in terms of equality and the distribution of a country's resources.

The Norwegian Government recognizes and particularly appreciates that many Governments of developing countries have prepared and are successfully implementing national action plans for children. This is in line with the Declaration and recommendations of the World Summit. These are strategic instruments for striving towards and hopefully reaching the World Summit goals. My Government is a strong advocate of so-called recipient responsibility, which means that policies and strategies in all aspects of the development of a country must be based on that country's own priorities. And these priorities should be based on the reality in that country as defined by its people through participatory processes.

My Government is strongly committed to questions concerning children, to satisfying children's needs and to assuring their rights. At the World Summit in 1990 emphasis was put on children's health. The world now faces great challenges related to the implementation of the rights of the child. Today, there is a balance between focus on the health of children and on their social rights. The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held at Stockholm in August, was a forceful contribution to bringing an end to this fundamental violation of the rights of the child.

Allow me in this context also to report that Norway will host a conference at Oslo in October next year. That conference will address the challenges related to the protection of children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Our particular reason for raising the issue of child labour is to identify how Norway and other countries can actively contribute to speeding up progress towards real implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and respect for the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention and other relevant international instruments, through development assistance and other forms of international cooperation. The approach should be to facilitate an open and constructive dialogue between Governments and representatives from organized groups of civil society, defining complementary strategies to reach the objective of combatting child labour. The conference in Oslo will focus on economic exploitation of the youngest children. Special efforts will be made to identify strategies for the eradication of child labour by children under 15 years of age.

On behalf of the Norwegian Government, let me commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its special role as a forceful advocate for children's well-being and children's rights all over the world and for its concrete and targeted action to mobilize resources to fulfil the goals set for the year 2000. Let me also commend the Committee on the Rights of the Child, under the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is directly responsible for the follow-up of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for its advise and support to Governments in their implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): If children are a country's wealth, a country's worth is measured by how it cares for its children. The 1989 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Summit for Children, and the World

Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children are welcome reminders that in the 1990s the Members of the United Nations take this responsibility seriously.

A few weeks ago the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) organized a ceremony in this building to commemorate the mid-decade review of the 1990 World Summit for Children. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, joined the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, and ministers and representatives of the five other initiating States of the World Summit to mark that important occasion. Their statements during the ceremony were strikingly similar: that while we, the world community, have made significant progress in fulfilling the objectives of the Summit's Plan of Action, much more remains to be done.

Canada is proud to have worked with Mr. James Grant, the previous Executive Director of UNICEF, and the other initiating States — Mexico, Pakistan, Sweden, Mali and Egypt — to make the World Summit a reality. As Mr. Axworthy stated, Canada renews its pledge made at the Summit to ensure full respect for the rights of children everywhere.

Through Canada's national programme of action, the Brighter Futures Initiative, which emerged from the World Summit, Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, introduced a child tax benefit, created an action plan for children and implemented a child development initiative. This latter programme emphasizes the important gains for children and society when children six years old and under get off to the best possible start in life. More than this, the Brighter Futures Initiative emphasized the link between our responsibility to the children of Canada and our responsibility to the children of the world.

In our 1995 blueprint for foreign policy, known as "Canada in the World", we give priority in our official development assistance to human rights, democracy and good governance, including an explicit reference to the rights of children as an integral part of that priority.

(spoke in English)

Indeed, by promising to commit 25 per cent of its official development assistance to meeting basic human needs, Canada has surpassed the United Nations goal of allocating 20 per cent of such assistance to basic social needs. We estimate that we contribute $660 million a year in support of children, a great deal of which is meeting basic human needs. There is a host of programmes and initiatives in this regard that we are proud of, but none more so than our efforts to reduce iodine deficiency, the principal cause of mental retardation worldwide. By UNICEF's estimate, progress towards universal salt iodization in 1995 saved 7 million children in 46 countries from mental impairment.

Canada will continue to focus on such issues as children and AIDS, street children and education. Canada's current investment in girl-child education is an example of the important interplay between gender equity, child well-being and sustainable development. For the past two years, Canada and UNICEF have been involved in a primary education programme for girls in 15 African countries. We will continue to pursue our goals in these and other areas in partnership with the United Nations and UNICEF and such Canadian non-governmental organizations as Save the Children Canada, Street Kids International and HealthReach.

Several days after the 30 September ceremony, Mr. Axworthy appeared before a parliamentary subcommittee in Canada to outline the Government's priorities in respect to international child-labour issues. We all know that child labour is rooted largely in poverty and that the eradication of abusive forms of child labour does not lend itself to easy solutions. Simply putting children out of work is not the answer. There must be alternatives for ensuring their education and care and the income of their families. Development cooperation, with an emphasis on poverty reduction and meeting basic needs, is central to Canada's efforts to attack the root causes of abusive child labour.

Canada has identified three areas in which we have deployed our development assistance to overcome the problem of child labour. First is affordable access to primary education, with particular attention to girls — a major goal identified at the World Summit. Second is improving the status, role and economic security of women as equal partners in development. These measures directly promote the well-being of children. Third is support for good governance. This is essential if Governments are to advance social-development goals in partnership with civil society and enforce existing laws and regulations governing the employment of children.

In the area of child sexual exploitation, Canada has amended its criminal code to prohibit child pornography and has introduced legislation that criminalizes child-sex tourism practiced by Canadians. Mr. Axworthy attended the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children at Stockholm in August, along with an impressive array of other people, including 700 representatives from 119 countries, over 100 participants from the United Nations itself and other international organizations, 500 non-governmental-organization and youth delegates and 500 media representatives. That high degree of participation in the Congress indicated the level of interest and commitment to the issue, but the success of the Congress will be measured ultimately by the extent to which the commercial sexual exploitation of children declines. In the interim, a measure of its success will be the extent to which the Declaration and Agenda for Action approved at the Congress are implemented. Later in this session, the Canadian delegation will be working to ensure effective follow-up to the Stockholm Agenda for Action.

The situation of child soldiers is also of great concern to Canada. We are participating actively in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Working Group to develop an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the situation of children in armed conflict. Another important step will be the release early next month of a report by the United Nations Secretary-General's expert on children in armed conflict, Mrs. Graça Machel. Again, my delegation will be working with others to take concrete action in response to Mrs. Machel's recommendations.

Canada is also giving close attention to children in post-conflict reconstruction and transition economies. Children are victims in disproportionate numbers of injuries involving landmines. As we have seen in Bosnia and Somalia, they are also tragically subject to post-traumatic stress. The recent international meeting at Ottawa provided important impetus for work on a global ban on landmines.

The mid-decade review is a testimony to what the world community can accomplish when it sets clear objectives and works together to achieve those goals. It is also a compelling statement of the work that lies ahead. Canada will work hard with all Members to complete our mission of establishing children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Nothing we could achieve here will be more important.

Ms. Durrant (Jamaica): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/51/256. That report gives a very detailed and clear analysis of the background to the World Summit for Children, the end-decade and mid-decade goals that were set at the Summit and the enormous effort and energy which were generated thereafter. We recall the way in which the wider international community became involved in an amazing drive to push the affairs of children to the top of our agenda.

Perhaps even more significant, however, was the Summit's catalytic effect on the issues relating to social development. The Secretary-General in his report rightly credits the children's Summit with encouraging the

> "regeneration of the international movement against poverty in all its social and economic dimensions." *(A/51/256, para. 3)*

Indeed, the Summit provided a blueprint for the series of global Conferences that followed, both at the Conferences themselves and in the implementation process.

The Government and people of Jamaica share in the Secretary-General's celebration of the significant progress made in the area of children's health and development, specifically in the achievement of mid-decade and even some end-decade goals by various countries and regions. Similarly, we share and support the Secretary-General's warning that there is still so much more to be done if we are to improve and/or maintain the existing conditions under which our children live.

Like many of the nations in the Latin American and Caribbean regions, Jamaica is on track to achieve most of the end-decade goals, having met all the mid-decade goals set by the World Summit, as well as those set by the Nariño Accord, which was adopted by regional leaders in 1994. The Nariño goals largely mirror those of the World Summit, but are more expansive in their scope and focus on issues of particular concern to the Latin American and Caribbean countries — for example, problems of teenage pregnancies, disabilities and child rights.

In August this year, regional leaders met at Santiago de Chile to review the progress made in the implementation of the goals of the Summit and of the Nariño Accord. The ministers adopted the Santiago Accord, which includes a set of goals that go even beyond those made set at Nariño. The new Accord calls for the adoption of modern social policies based on human and children's rights and defines the new goals for the region, primarily in the areas of child rights, reproductive health and gender equality.

Despite Jamaica's many strides over the past few decades in the areas of maternal and child health, there is a need for critical improvement in these areas, as well as in the area of child protection. Jamaica was the first country of the Caribbean Community to appear before the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We have since finalized a new country programme with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which will promote compliance with the recommendations of the Committee. This will be done through the implementation of selected and relevant goals of our national plan of action.

As with many other nations, poverty is the basic cause of problems affecting Jamaica's children, with one third of those under four years of age living in extreme poverty. The Government of Jamaica has declared the eradication of poverty its highest priority. Consequently, any programme related to the well-being of children will have to focus on deprived, underserviced geographical areas and low-income groups. To illustrate, the Government of Jamaica new cooperation programme with UNICEF has four components, which will concentrate on the survival, protection and development rights of Jamaica's children. This will, in turn, be based on the following main areas: social planning; advocacy and mobilization, particularly as they relate to the rights of all children to survival, development and protection; education and young child development; the needs and rights of children who are especially vulnerable; and improving the quality of life in designated low-income communities through the provision of basic services and the empowerment of the community. We recognize, of course, that this programme is an ambitious one, made even more so by the fact that it focuses mainly on those problem areas which require much advocacy, sustained over a long period of time.

The Secretary-General in his report identifies resource mobilization as a major challenge faced by countries in the implementation process. In this regard, we believe that the collaboration is vital among governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral development-assistance agencies. Here, I would like to emphasize that countries should be rewarded, and not penalized, for their successes in the area of child development.

In this, the sixth anniversary year of the World Summit for Children, when we are but three years shy of the year 2000, questions are often raised as to the utility of the many global conferences which have been held since 1990. The World Summit for Children stands as an impressive testimony to the ability of such conferences to generate concrete results. Now, even six years later, the spirit generated by the Summit is still at a high point. I would like to urge all present not to lose track of this positive development. We must do everything in our power to ensure that, in another six years, the drive to improve the welfare of the world's children will be as strong or even stronger. In this connection, Jamaica wishes to endorse the suggestion, presented in the Secretary-General's report, that the General Assembly consider holding a special session in 2001 to again examine the progress achieved in the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as to consider goals and strategies beyond the year 2000.

Mr. De Rojas (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his report on the progress at mid-decade and for his assessment of achievement of the mid-decade and end-decade goals, as requested in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. The report is a clear reflection of the task ahead, since it includes an objective analysis, not only of the progress achieved at mid-decade, but also of the lessons learned and the challenges ahead for achieving the goals for children by the year 2000.

The World Summit for Children marked a definitive step towards an era in which children's issues will acquire all the political importance they deserve and promises made to children at the international level will become plans of action. In this regard, as the report states, this process of national programmes of action is unique in the history of the United Nations development work and represents a new modality in the relationship between international decision-making and measures at the national level.

In our region, the Ibero-American Summit held in April 1994 adopted a number of objectives for the countries of the Nariño Accord. At the third Inter-American ministerial meeting on children, held in Chile on 8 and 9 August this year, we reiterated the priority of boys, girls and adolescents in the social agenda for the hemisphere for the remainder of the century, fostering integration of social and economic policies following an integrated approach, which would increase the level of social investments so as to overcome poverty and make progress on human development.

At that meeting, we also once again reiterated our commitment to fulfilling the goals for children and social development by the year 2000, in accordance with national priorities, policies, programmes and laws, so as to adapt these goals to the practical situation in each country.

In Venezuela in recent years, we have undertaken a series of actions aimed at improving our management of social policies. In this regard, we have reviewed and updated the goals of the Summit through programmes, projects and actions aimed at promoting respect for the civic rights of children embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We wish to mention the legislative progress made in my country to bring internal laws in line with the Convention's provisions.

Venezuela stands firm in its commitment to the most important resource for our development: our boys, girls and adolescents. In order to achieve our goals regarding malnutrition, we have taken action in the areas of food supplements, including a programme for minors who are not in institutions; programmes for nutritional rehabilitation; programmes for milk and other dairy programmes for pre-schoolers; snack programmes for pre-schoolers; multi-home programmes; a food programme for the school population; and food scholarships. The refocusing of social policy on certain population groups has been a creative step. The principal criteria used to identify the groups to focus on include vulnerability and the prioritizing of higher-risk groups, such as children under six, pregnant women, nursing mothers, out-of-school youth, malnourished children and so on.

"Agenda Venezuela", an integral part of the agreement my country recently signed with the International Monetary Fund, embodies the right of Venezuelans to protect their family as the fundamental nucleus of our society. The State of Venezuela has committed itself to giving priority attention to mothers and children, health and education. "Agenda Venezuela" also incorporates a range of social programmes aimed at channelling resources towards the protection of the most vulnerable social groups in order partially to compensate for decreases in family income during the difficult adjustment period.

Venezuela continues to support all preventive-action measures, *inter alia*, to improve the quality of education through programmes promoting mutual respect between boys and girls in pre-school and primary and secondary educational establishments.

As far back as the last century, José Martí wrote that girls should know the same as boys and that we should work for children because they are the hope of the world. We must unite our efforts to achieve the goals before us so that the dreams of the past and the promises of the present may come true.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): At this review of the progress at mid-decade on implementation of resolution 45/217 of the General Assembly on the World Summit for Children, the delegation of Tunisia would like to comment on this issue.

I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General on the quality of the report submitted to us. The World Summit for Children held six years ago marked an historic stage in the growing importance of the children's cause in the world through the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action which identified goals for States to the year 2000 and involve the United Nations in support for national efforts.

First, I wish to recall that the goals set in 1990 at the World Summit for Children have had an extraordinary mobilizing effect, which we welcome. Throughout the world, activities undertaken have given rise to a burgeoning of programmes for children. They have also helped to create new partnerships between Governments and non-governmental organizations. Donors, the media, society and international organizations have, for their part, mobilized around a common goal.

The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as the integration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into international law, have provided the legal framework that has supported the growing momentum for the children's cause throughout the world. In defining quantifiable and time-bound goals, the Summit was a pioneer in mobilizing resources and eliciting commitment.

With regard to specific achievements, Tunisia welcomes the results arrived at in many countries in terms of follow-up activities to the World Summit. The report of the Secretary-General on this question provides some information, some of which seems extremely eloquent to me. The goals regarding the survival of children have been achieved with respect to immunization coverage, control of diarrhoeal diseases, poliomyelitis, the control of iodine-deficiency disorders, access to drinking water and the promotion of breastfeeding.

Eighty-nine countries have already reached the mid-decade goal by achieving 90 per cent immunization coverage. There is every reason to hope for the elimination of poliomyelitis by the year 2000. The number of people without access to drinking water has fallen by about one-third since 1990. The mid-decade goal has also been attained in the matter of the promotion of breastfeeding with the adoption of baby-friendly practices in maternity facilities. Here, I would like to stress the very positive impact of the Plan of Action in terms of sustainable development for the countries of the South.

These achievements, according to recent reports of the United Nations Children's Fund, have helped significantly to foster the well-being of the people concerned throughout the world.

First, the time-bound goals, which were defined with local conditions uppermost in mind, have speeded up development efforts. Secondly, these results have shown that the provision of equipment and access to basic services, however essential, are not enough. Above all, poor people need to be able to control their social and economic future and we need to strengthen national capacities and social mobilization, the keys to lasting progress. Basic education, primary health care and nutrition are part of the most effective and viable strategy for breaking the spiral of poverty, overpopulation and environmental degradation. That kind of investment can help considerably to reduce poverty in a relatively brief span of time.

With regard to Tunisia and its national efforts, I am pleased to refer to the achievements that the public authorities, in close cooperation with the active forces of civil society, have made for children.

Tunisia's interest in child protection and development has evolved remarkably as a basic element in our human-resources development policy. The attention we devote to children is based on the conviction that any investment in future generations is the best guarantee of progress and stability in the country.

The reforms and the steps taken for children are in keeping with the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. They have been reflected in the elaboration since 1991 of a national programme of action; its adoption and integration into our economic development plan in 1992 shows how determined Tunisia is to honour its commitments to children.

The national programme of action was consolidated by the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991; the celebration of National Children's Day on 11 January every year, pursuant to a decision of the President of the Republic; the establishment in 1995 of the President's prize for the rights of the child, which is awarded every year to individuals, organizations, institutions and bodies that have distinguished themselves nationally, regionally or globally by providing eminent services in the areas of the rights of the child and the protection and development of children; the adoption in November 1995 of the Code for the Protection of Children, which recognizes the higher interests of children and establishes a network of delegates to protect children throughout Tunisia, thus promoting preventive action for children in difficult circumstances; the revision of the Family Code, the Penal Code, the Code of Obligations and Contracts and a certain number of laws to harmonize legislative instruments and to consolidate the rights of children; the creation of a follow-up mechanism to ensure that the objectives of the national programme of action for children are being met through the drafting of an annual report on the situation of children that is submitted to the Council of Ministers in January every year.

In the area of health, we stress the efforts made by Tunisia in terms of basic health, particularly in the area of maternal and child health, wide immunization coverage, the development of family planning services and the extension of social coverage to all of our people.

Among the most important indicators of the success of this health policy, we note the eradication of children's diseases through the establishment by the State of specific intensive national programmes, of which there are now six, constituting the basic components of maternal and children's health. We also note the reduction of the mortality rate for children under five from 244 per thousand live births in 1966 to 38 per thousand in 1994, as well as the reduction of the infant mortality rate from 163 per thousand in 1962 to 32 per thousand in 1994.

The results obtained nationally have enabled my country to enjoy continuous progress in terms of human development. Human and social progress in Tunisia is not an isolated phenomenon. It involves the programme of action which I mentioned, but it is also part of a world movement that brings together all Members of the United Nations, thus allowing economic development to go hand in hand with social development and leading to the attainment of sustainable human-development goals.

Thus, I wish to express our satisfaction at the progress described in the Secretary-General's report. However, in this field perhaps more than in others, efforts needs to be ongoing. However laudable the achievements might be, we should not lose sight of the fact that many grey areas exist throughout the world in which no social progress has been seen, particularly in terms of the improved status of children, especially in Africa and South-East Asia. Millions of children are still deprived of this progress. The infant mortality rate is going down, but too slowly, and maternal mortality continues to be an acute problem. Little progress has been made as regards malnutrition and elementary education.

Furthermore, children in conflict zones in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere suffer the most abominable mutilations and continue to die as much from bombs as from the effects of malnutrition and disease. The most dramatic example remains that of Iraqi children, many of whom have died from lack of food and medicines. The international community has a duty to put an end to this tragic situation as soon as possible.

In order to attain the goals of the Summit, we must continue to mobilize resources at every level. I wish to refer here to the Secretary-General's report, which stresses the following points: the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children called upon all countries to re-examine their budgets to ensure that programmes aimed at the protection and development of children would have priority. In order to do this, every effort should be made to ensure that such programmes be protected in times of economic austerity and structural adjustments. In order to attain these goals, clearly, additional resources must be provided. Therefore, the Secretary-General's report says that an additional $20 billion per year would be needed over the course of the decade.

In order to maintain the spirit of the Summit and to keep our promises to children, Tunisia supports the Secretary-General's proposal to hold a special session in five years' time to review progress made on the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations

A/51/PV.36

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

36th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 16 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 119 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of expenses of the United Nations (A/51/366/Add.4)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/51/366/Add.4, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 17 and 20 September, and 2 and 11 October 1996, Sao Tome and Principe has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 45

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/348)

The President: Before calling on the first speaker on this agenda item, I should like to propose, if there is no objection, that the list of speakers for the debate on this item be closed at 12 noon.

It was so decided.

Mrs. Castro de Barish (Costa Rica) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Costa Rica is pleased to express its satisfaction at your excellent and innovative performance, Sir, in the exercise of the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Group of 77 and China welcome the Bureau's decision to allocate this important item to the plenary, since it concerns the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen. Our Group acknowledges with appreciation the initiative and effort of the Government of Chile, a member of the Group of 77, and of China in convening this Summit on subjects of such great relevance and urgency. We believe that multilateral cooperation is indispensable to meeting the fundamental challenges that affect the survival of our peoples on the eve of the twenty-first century and of the next millennium.

We would like to stress that, in accordance with the agreements reached at the World Summit, a special session of the General Assembly will be convened in the year 2000 in order to assess the implementation of those agreements. Clearly, the follow-up of the Summit by the plenary and on that occasion fully justifies such effort.

The Commission for Social Development held a special session in order to implement the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission reviewed its mandate, its terms of

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reference, the composition of its membership, its scope of work and the frequency of its meetings, and it also elaborated a multi-year programme of work. In this regard, we wish to reiterate the importance that our Group attaches to the follow-up of the Summit by the Commission for Social Development. This important Commission has been strengthened by the decision to hold annual instead of biennial sessions, to expand its membership from 32 to 46, and to ensure it a minimum of eight working days so that it can better and more efficiently fulfil its mandate. We expect that the required resources will be made available.

The Group is pleased that the Commission adopted a resolution that called for the implementation of agreed measures to eradicate poverty and for strengthened international cooperation to that end, and which also called on the international community to mobilize additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable to contribute to poverty eradication.

We must acknowledge our responsibility to leave to future generations a framework for this cooperation. True security is global. Poverty and exclusion should not be the only perspectives for two thirds of humankind. It is not possible to ignore the inequality of world development and the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.

Development and social justice remain an elusive dream for poor people around the world. The Group of 77 and China share this sentiment and reiterate the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development. The Summit recognized that the peoples of the world have demonstrated and reiterated the urgent need to focus on critical social problems, particularly poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The task before us is to take due account of both the underlying and structural causes and their unfortunate consequences, so as to reduce the uncertainty and insecurity of their lives. We are convinced that individuals should not only be the beneficiaries of development, but should also have the opportunity to become the agents of their own development.

Humankind has begun to recognize that poverty is not an inevitable part of the human condition. It can be conquered and eradicated from the face of the earth. We have the resources and the organizational ability to do this successfully. The issue has always been the political will of all Members of the United Nations to attain this objective and to pursue it within a framework of global partnership for development, with the aim of waging a concerted fight against poverty and its consequences. This would give globalization and interdependence a more profound dimension.

In their efforts to become integrated in the global economy, many developing countries have been compelled to undertake structural adjustments at enormous social and human cost. Although this process has adversely affected all developing countries, the African countries and the least developed countries in other parts of the world have been the most seriously affected by this critical situation.

In the absence of an external environment to support their national development efforts, many developing countries continue to languish in poverty, backwardness and stagnation, and even to experience negative economic growth. Every year, between 13 million and 18 million people, most of them children, perish from hunger and from poverty-related causes.

The Fourth World Conference on Women recognized that the eradication of poverty will require implementing and integrating strategies at the national and international levels, addressing all the critical areas of concern outlined in the Platform for Action that it adopted. The Conference emphasized, among other things, that empowering women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty, and it gave particular priority to the situation of women living in poverty, recognizing the need to improve their access to income, education, health care and other resources.

As long as the developing countries remain on the periphery of international decision-making, which would enable them to devise global solutions to the global economic problems that affect them, this unfortunate state of affairs will continue. It needs to be faced resolutely and in a spirit of solidarity by both the developing countries and the developed countries that are Members of this world Organization. After all, the United Nations is an Organization that, because of its very nature, principles and objectives, transcends all individual or national interests to represent the interests of all. No better form of partnership has yet been proposed at the global level to address the major problems of an increasingly interdependent world.

Our Group supports the Secretary-General's System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which reinforces the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. A major constraint on the development efforts of these countries is the critical loss of the financial and human resources to combat poverty and underdevelopment. In an international climate in which they are unable to secure adequate levels of investment or other financial sources to promote development, they must depend almost exclusively on official development assistance. Regrettably, however, such assistance has plummeted over the past decade, dropping by as much as 25 per cent in the past four years alone.

Even more daunting, especially with regard to the heavily indebted poor countries, including those of Africa, is the continuing crisis of excessive external indebtedness. Notwithstanding the broad range of internationally supported debt-relief measures carried out over the past decade, the crisis continues to cripple the ability of these countries to generate economic growth and development. There is a critical need, therefore, to expand the current international debt strategy so that it becomes more comprehensive, development-oriented and durable.

In this regard, we welcome the approval of the Bretton Woods institutions' proposal to reduce the overall debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries to more sustainable levels. However, to enhance the initiative's chances of success, we call on the Bretton Woods institutions to further refine it so as to make it less restrictive by, for instance, reducing the adjustment period from six to three years and by modifying eligibility requirements so as to better serve the legitimate interests of the developing countries.

We reiterate that investing in people is as vital as investing in capital. Special attention should be paid to sound basic education, to skill formation and to training, which is a lifelong undertaking that improves the transition from school to work.

The Copenhagen Declaration, adopted by all the Summit participants, stressed that development and social justice are indispensable for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security within and among our nations. Conversely, social development and social justice cannot be achieved in the absence of peace and security or of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This basic interdependence was recognized 50 years ago in the Charter of the United Nations and has gained strength ever since.

The Group appeals to all Member States and to the United Nations system to honour their commitments, particularly with respect to the provision of adequate resources, to ensure full implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. At the twentieth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China, held in New York on 27 September 1996, the Ministers stressed the fact that 1996 is the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and that the General Assembly declared the years 1997-2006 as the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. In this context, the Ministers reaffirmed that the goal of eradicating poverty in the world is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative that can be achieved only through a multidimensional and integrated approach. They also emphasized that the commitments agreed upon at the World Summit for Social Development should be fully implemented. To this end, they look forward with interest to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000, which will review and appraise the outcome of the Summit with a view to considering further initiatives on the eradication of poverty.

Let us therefore make every effort to fully realize the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, with their lofty principles and commitments, to fulfil the just aspirations and urgent needs of all our peoples on a universal basis as we begin the new millennium.

Mr. Camacho-Omiste (Bolivia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is an honour for the delegation of Bolivia, in its capacity as coordinator of the Rio Group, to make this statement on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica — representing the countries of Central America — Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The Rio Group believes that at the World Summit for Social Development, one of the most important events of our times, the international community recognized the need to adopt urgent measures to check social problems.

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted at that time established the guidelines for the creation of a just society for all and for effectively meeting human needs, on the basis of democracy, human rights, equality, social justice, tolerance and respect for diversity.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, and particularly its 10 commitments, made economic and political issues the focus of international debate. The key element of Copenhagen is the interrelationship between analysis and processes, which were previously approached in a partial and fragmented manner, and an emphasis on the fact that poverty is a worldwide concern and a threat to world peace and security.

At the conclusion of the series of high-level world Conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations in the course of the 1990s, we noted that their common denominator was the promotion of economic and social justice, with the fundamental objective of approaching the structural causes of poverty in a concerted manner. The Declaration and Programme of Action establish an interrelationship between the outcome of the Social Summit and agreements reached prior to the World Summit on Children in 1990, followed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992, the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in April and May 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development in September 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995, and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in June 1996.

The General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, included on its agenda the item "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development", and in considering in plenary the report of the Summit emphasized the nature of that Conference, pointing out its role as the foundation for the elaboration of national and international social development policies.

It also decided that a revitalized Commission for Social Development, together with the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly itself, would constitute a "three-tiered intergovernmental process" in the follow-up to the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action.

In his report, the Secretary-General describes the measures taken in the wake of the adoption of resolution 50/161, and draws attention in particular to commitment 2 of the Copenhagen Declaration and to chapter 2 of the Programme of Action, concerning the observance in 1996 of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and the proclamation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

In this context, the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Rio Group, meeting in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia, on 3 and 4 September 1996, reaffirmed our Governments' resolve to overcome poverty, malnutrition, exclusion, lack of access to health services, and illiteracy, through policies leading to sustainable economic development in the medium and long term.

Our leaders appealed to the international financial institutions to strengthen their support in the fight against poverty by providing resources and technical assistance to national programmes.

The countries of the Rio Group reaffirm their support for the holding of a special session in the year 2000 to undertake an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and to consider further measures and initiatives.

As a complementary measure to the Summit for Social Development, the 20/20 initiative recognized the objective that to achieve the eradication of absolute poverty, we must formulate a broad range of policies and take actions at all levels. The Oslo consensus on the 20/20 initiative pointed out that basic social services must be made universal and that their beneficiaries should preferentially be the poorest and most vulnerable sectors.

As stated in the Declaration of Cochabamba, we the member countries of the Rio Group undertook to continue to implement favourable policies to enable economic agents, in particular small and medium businesses, to create productive jobs with livable remuneration levels. We also undertook to promote education, training and social skills, with priority given to the more vulnerable sectors of our populations.

In this context, the member countries of the Rio Group reiterate their support for resolution 48/98 of the General Assembly, which calls upon the Secretary-General to draft a conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation for and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

The global theme of the year, "Towards a society for all ages", constitutes an appeal for the participation of all generations and organizations from all sectors of society. This sends a message that all men and women, of any age or status, have a valuable contribution to make to society. This in turn helps to promote dialogue between generations and social harmony.

The member countries of the Rio Group consider that with the International Year of Older Persons we will come closer to achieving the ultimate objective of social integration, which is to create a society for all, in which each individual will have an active role to play.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) *(interpretation from French)*: Mr. President, I know how important it is to you that we be concise in our statements, and I am aware of the great concern you have for making the best possible use of the time allotted to us. That is your mark of distinction.

After reiterating to you the congratulations of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would like to turn to agenda item 45, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". I also endorse the points made by the Ambassador of Costa Rica in his statement here on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

A total of 118 heads of State and Government and over 800 non-governmental organizations all acknowledged in March 1995, at Copenhagen, Denmark, the vital relationship between social development and improving the human condition. Commitments were undertaken to work urgently to attain the goals set, principles for action were determined, and directives were provided for implementing and following up the outcome of the Summit.

What is the situation almost 18 months later? Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/161, we now have the report of the Secretary-General, which gives us an overview of the initiatives and actions undertaken as part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. The efforts made by the United Nations system to coordinate follow-up activities to the major United Nations conferences, whose common denominator is development, are immediately evident.

My delegation would like to make the following assessment of the Social Summit. Three major themes emerged at the Conference: the battle against poverty and measures to promote development; the involvement of civil society; and the need for financial resources.

In connection with the first issue, the debate held in the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of the activities of United Nations bodies to eradicate poverty yielded objective, balanced and clear conclusions. Combating poverty is primarily the responsibility of Governments, which must formulate, execute and strengthen national plans and programmes.

The international community is duty-bound to discharge the commitments it has undertaken. Poverty can be national or regional; but its origin always — in one way or another and to varying degrees — has international dimensions. As a result, the implementation of plans and programmes to combat poverty succeed better through the development of increased solidarity, through honest, serious cooperation and through self-reliance and the shouldering of one's full responsibilities, relying on a foundation of social justice, equity and respect for others.

With regard to measures taken in favour of social development, we must recognize the work of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and encourage them to redouble their efforts. Loans made within this framework must be harmonized with the special situations of the recipients in order to prevent interest from accumulating at a dizzying rate. Recipient populations should not arrive at an impasse, crippled by growing debts instead of enjoying sought-after and well-deserved social well-being.

The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which highlights the priorities of health, education, water and food security, should become one of the operational aspects of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

At the institutional level, the United Nations Commission for Social Development will be expanded soon through the election of new members. The General Assembly must provide that body with the necessary means to discharge its mandate and fulfil its role.

The involvement of civil society in social development is a growing trend. The increasing commitment and activity of the non-governmental organizations, together with governmental responsibility and action, is weaving a new fabric of solidarity among individuals, peoples and nations. This valuable, daily contribution at the grass-roots level should be utilized in the social sphere in a way and to an extent that are compatible with the sovereign expression of States.

However, the mobilization of human and material resources through non-governmental organizations is not enough in itself to meet the needs expressed or to satisfy the priorities of peoples. This brings me to the oft-asked about the financial resources needed to implement the social programmes and plans formulated at the World Summit for Social Development and as part of its follow-up. The Summit's conclusions included the 20/20 initiative, which the Oslo meeting, held in April 1996, further defined in order to make it operational. This opens up the possibility of allowing everyone to benefit from basic social services, according to a realistic and precise timetable.

That timetable was established on the basis of a redirection of available resources. It is to be followed by the mobilization of additional resources and, finally, by an improvement in the effectiveness and quality of services.

Burkina Faso supports the 20/20 initiative and has agreed to participate in a pilot plan for its implementation.

Still within the framework of the follow-up of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, Burkina Faso has set up an inter-ministerial follow-up national committee, headed by the Prime Minister. This committee has three key tasks before it: to monitor the specific implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development at all ministerial and institutional levels; to develop initiatives to consolidate and accelerate the implementation of the outcome of the Summit; and to monitor coordination of the various steps taken at the national level.

The committee's permanent secretariat provides a formal structure for negotiations, which have led to the elaboration of a national programme of activities. Burkina Faso, despite its limited resources, is preparing to continue its work following the holding of a national workshop to heighten people's awareness of the outcome of the Summit.

In the short and long terms, combating unemployment is best done by adopting a global approach that takes account of material, social and psychological factors. The promotion of Burkina Faso's social sectors is in keeping with its desire to build a just and unified society in the place of the current one, in which destitution and the law of the market are shredding our social fabric. Burkina Faso's social development policies are therefore focused on education, health and the environment. Women are the driving force in this regard because rapid progress cannot be made without their participation in socio-economic activities, an area in which they are already very active, particularly in informal ways. These are some of the aspects of Burkina Faso's follow-up to the Social Summit.

I wish to conclude by stressing the need for genuine partnership. The coordination and complementarity of activities and development programmes is increasingly necessary at the intergovernmental and non-governmental levels. We all still need to respect our commitments and the agreed priorities and programmes, and to work tirelessly so that political will does not waver and the aspirations of our people for justice and peace with solidarity can prevail.

Mr. Shah (India): Since this is the first time I have spoken, Sir, since you assumed the presidency, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. You have already displayed some of your well-known talent for organization and effectiveness, and my delegation looks forward to working further with you to improve the effectiveness and the image of the General Assembly.

My delegation heard with interest the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and lends its support to that statement.

At the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, our leaders committed themselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind. At the international level, it was agreed to focus attention on and support the special needs of countries and regions in which there are substantial concentrations of people living in poverty. They are the ones who face the most serious difficulties in achieving social and economic development. The Summit reaffirmed rights in the areas of education, food, shelter, employment, health and information, particularly for the purpose of assisting people living in poverty. On the other two core issues identified for the Summit, they committed themselves to promoting the goal of full employment and social integration.

The world today stands at the crossroads of history, even as it struggles to free itself from the attitudes and confines of the cold-war era. Certain paradigms of development that had placed the State alone at the centre have had to be reversed significantly. National rivalries and competition, defined in the past along ideological lines, are searching for new identities and motivations. Interest in the cause of development, often defined in the context of a search for allies, is now giving way to an unfortunate questioning of the utility of international development cooperation. The pendulum has swung decisively to the syndrome of private-sector-based growth and to a tendency to put an unfettered market system alone at the centre of the new scheme of things.

While this enthusiasm is being pushed throughout the world, practical experience is generating a search for and recourse to an approach that blends economic growth with social justice and market imperatives with social and environmental concerns. There is a continued role for public policy, both at the national and international levels, to tackle market imperfections and failures. Otherwise, the poor and the weak will suffer continued exclusion from growth and prosperity due to the imperfections and the tyranny of the market.

At both the Social Summit and the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the positive and negative effects of globalization were reflected upon. It was also recognized that the rapid processes of change and adjustment have been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, and that they bring increased risks of instability and marginalization.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra), Vice-President, took the Chair.

To succeed, any long-term strategy must place people at the centre. This centrality of people in the development process is extremely important. It was recognized in the Rio Declaration and reaffirmed and expanded upon at Copenhagen. The central strategy for achieving social and economic development to sustain human progress should be to empower the people themselves. The effort must be to empower every disadvantaged class and group, particularly women. This will be possible only when certain rights fundamental to human development are guaranteed to people.

In today's context, international cooperation remains essential to facilitate and accelerate national economic and social development. All countries, regardless of their geographical location, are in need of social development and integration. The dominant causes for discord may be different in different countries, but no society can claim to be fully integrated. We have only to look around us to see the exclusion and marginalization experienced by significant sections of the population in developed countries, due in part to human failings and imperfections of social organization and due significantly to the dictates of the market-based approach.

The core issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration cannot be addressed credibly without adequate resources, non-discriminatory access to markets and the availability of modern technologies for invigorating economic and social progress. At the national level, countries have to commit the resources required to secure the rights of the poor in terms of building infrastructure, building and strengthening institutions, formulating policies and designing strategies and mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation that permit sustainable implementation.

The father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, mobilized the masses of India in our struggle for freedom. He inspired an impoverished nation to win freedom from the world's mightiest empire by non-violent means. As India struggles towards its second freedom, the freedom from want, disease and ignorance, we go back to Mahatma Gandhi and his technique of social mobilization of the people. Our strategy goes well beyond representative governance and endeavours to involve more and more people at the grass-roots level. Our current five-year plan, the eighth, stipulates that

> "it is necessary to make development a people's movement, and people's initiative and participation must become the key element to the whole process of development".

To this end, in the last couple of years, we have amended our Constitution to provide for decentralized, participative, village-level democratic institutions with statutory representation to the socially disadvantaged groups of our people. One third of all elective representative posts at the local level have been reserved for women. A bill has now been introduced in the Indian Parliament to reserve for women one third of Federal and State legislative offices. It is our resolve to make the concerns of gender and the rights of children, adolescents and youth the centre of all our decision-making, including economic decision-making. Beginning next year with the ninth five-year plan, India's expenditure on education is planned to rise from its present 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product to 6 per cent of GDP. The Common Minimum Programme, adopted by the United Front Government constituted after the elections earlier this year, has also set for itself the target of eradicating absolute poverty by the year 2005.

In Copenhagen our leaders adopted a visionary document that incorporates major commitments for national action and international cooperation. It is essential that we put in place effective follow-up machinery to translate these commitments into action. The discussions that have taken place so far in the Commission for Social Development and the information that has been made available to the Commission show clearly that most of the follow-up action has been at the national level. There has been very little progress in the area of international cooperation. The Commission should take a more critical look at these aspects in its forthcoming meetings. The synergy between national action and international cooperation should not be allowed to fall out of balance merely because of perceived domestic constraints in the developed countries.

There is a clearly recognized need to increase substantially the resources available for international cooperation for social development. It is particularly shocking, therefore, that soon after the adoption of these major commitments, we are faced with the prospect of the eleventh replenishment of the International Development Association at reduced real levels. Greater attention should be paid to the commitments made to facilitate increased transfer of real resources to the developing countries. Legitimate worldwide concern with social development ought not simply to degenerate into additional conditionalities imposed on developing countries from outside. The social-development agenda cannot be viewed in isolation. The domestic resources needed for social development can be mobilized only if the economy is growing rapidly. A holistic approach has to be adopted in assessing the balance between expenditure on economic services and expenditure on social services.

The entire United Nations system should be involved in the follow-up process. The Bretton Woods institutions and the specialized agencies, in particular the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), should be involved in the follow-up process in a coordinated manner. We should look at not only the situation in developing countries, but also the societal problems in developed countries. My delegation supports the three-tiered structure for follow-up, which is now in place, consisting of the Commission on Social Development as the functional commission with primary responsibility; the Economic and Social Council, with responsibility for coordination; and the General Assembly, with responsibility for policy guidance. We also welcome the decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 to review implementation.

For their part, of course, the developing countries must increase the availability of domestic resources by reorienting public expenditure and minimizing waste. However, the central question relating to the overall limits of available resources cannot be ignored. Given low per capita income levels, sufficient resources cannot be mobilized for the programmes outlined at the Summit, even with the best political will and expenditure policies. The onus therefore rests on the international community to generate a substantial increase in the flow of external resources for poverty eradication and social development. This has to be achieved not just through conventional means, such as official development assistance, but also through measures in the areas of trade, development and technology transfer, in the clear recognition that accelerated and sustained growth rates in the developing countries will, in turn, generate greater trade and employment benefits for developed countries.

I believe that in the post-cold-war era our countries have, through the United Nations, entered into a major compact for national economic and social development and international cooperation to this end. This compact is embodied in the outcomes of the series of world conferences held over the past five years. We now have to ensure an effective and coordinated follow-up of the commitments undertaken, including commitments for international cooperation.

Mr. Albín (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: First, I wish to state that my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Rio Group.

Last year the General Assembly adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, which resulted from the World Summit for Social Development, thereby enshrining social development as an essential element in human progress. The growing deterioration in the living conditions of millions of people and the alarming spread of poverty and unemployment were the elements that triggered consideration of this matter at the highest political level. The outcome of the Summit stressed the importance of urgent and decisive action on the part of Governments and the international community as a whole. Social development now constitutes an undisputed priority on national agendas, as well as on that of the international community.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action provide a framework for governmental action at the national and international levels. We, the Member States, are obliged to fulfil the commitments that we freely entered into there. In accordance with commitment 1 of the Copenhagen Declaration, and despite the economic difficulties we have faced, social policy currently absorbs most of Mexico's budget. Of every 100 pesos spent by the Government, 54 pesos — more than half — are spent on measures to improve the living conditions of people, families and communities. Social expenditure accounts for 9.2 per cent of gross domestic product.

In Mexico, social support policies cover the entire population and include special measures for those who live in conditions of extreme poverty. We are aware that additional efforts are required to break the vicious circle of malnutrition, poor health, educational deficiencies and lack of opportunities. Our main challenge on the eve of a new millennium is to meet the needs of approximately 22 million Mexicans who live in extreme poverty.

In order to implement commitment 2 of the Copenhagen Declaration, Mexico has accepted the imperative ethical, social, political and economic need to overcome poverty by taking vigorous action, with the main short-term objective of mitigating the effects of deficiencies and the long-term aim of establishing conditions for the sustained reduction of economic and social inequality.

As was emphasized at the Summit, overcoming poverty is linked to better control over resources and the expansion of social participation in decision-making mechanisms. To that end, we have promoted an integrated policy tied to the strengthening of democracy in the country. In his second Government report, President Zedillo announced that, on the basis of an integrated and federalist approach, efforts being carried out separately in the areas of food, health and basic education had been coordinated in a more coherent and effective programme. The Government of Mexico will continue to take whatever measures are necessary to achieve the goals agreed upon at the Summit.

A consideration of the subject of social development from a broad-based and integrated perspective was one of the most significant achievements of the Summit. It stressed the direct relationship between the promotion of equality of opportunity, economic growth and the international economic context. It was recognized that social development is the responsibility of each country, and it was accepted that in order to achieve it, a stronger collective effort by the international community is needed.

In this context, the contribution of the United Nations system is crucial. The agencies of the system must incorporate the goals agreed upon in Copenhagen into all their activities, so as to give effective support to Governments in translating these commitments into concrete policies and programmes.

At the intergovernmental level, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development must continue, in timely fashion, to follow up implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Summit. The Economic and Social Council has taken an important step in substantially changing the nature of the Commission for Social Development by giving it a central role in following up the implementation of agreements made in Copenhagen.

Strengthening the mandate of the Commission, in addition to establishing new working methods, annualizing meetings, expanding the membership and adopting a multi-year programme of work to address all the issues contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, should allow the Commission to follow up the implementation of these commitments in an effective, integrated and broad-based manner. The Commission will provide a suitable forum for an exchange of national experiences, assess achievements and obstacles and formulate necessary substantive recommendations to achieve the goals established. The establishment of inter-agency task forces within the system has encouraged greater coordination and made a positive contribution to this effort.

As the Copenhagen Declaration states, the human being must be at the centre of development, and in this context, economy must be aimed at meeting the needs of all members of society. We must attach the highest priority to promoting social progress and improving the human condition, on the basis of the full participation of all. Economic development with social justice is one of the central objectives that we established at the Summit. The Government of Mexico today reiterates its commitment to this fundamental cause.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): At its fiftieth session the General Assembly reaffirmed the commitments made by the Heads of the State or Government at Copenhagen and decided to give highest priority to the national, regional and international policies and actions for the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition, based on full participation by all. By its resolution 50/161, the General Assembly underlined the critical importance of national action and international cooperation for social development and attributed this specific role to the United

Nations system for implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report outlining the progress made so far and the initiatives he proposes to take for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action.

We are also happy that the follow-up and implementation of the World Summit for Social Development is being discussed and considered in plenary meeting. Our general concerns on the matter have largely been expressed in the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77. I should like to elaborate on the specific issues of concern for Bangladesh and the least developed countries.

We all recall that last year the Assembly recognized that the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action in developing countries, in particular Africa and the least developed countries, would need additional financial resources and more effective development cooperation and assistance. The Assembly also concurred in the view that substantial debt reduction would be needed to enable developing countries to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action, as set out in commitment 9 of the Declaration and paragraph 90 of the Programme of Action. The debt burden of many least developed countries, particularly in Africa, is unsustainable. Although a few steps have been taken to give debt relief to these countries, the measures remain grossly inadequate.

We recognize with satisfaction that the important 20/20 initiative, which was endorsed by the Copenhagen Summit, was also endorsed and its importance reiterated by the General Assembly. We are also happy to note that at a recent meeting in Oslo consensus was reached with regard to the implementation of this important initiative and its universal application. We commend the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands for organizing the meeting, which outlined the framework and modalities for implementation of the 20/20 initiative. We believe that the main focus for the 20/20 initiative should be the effective and efficient delivery of basic social services to the poor and disadvantaged and other vulnerable sectors of our society.

We are encouraged to note that the Commission for Social Development called upon the international community to seek to mobilize additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable to contribute to poverty eradication. During discussions in Paris in 1990 on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, and subsequently in many international conferences, our partners in development expressed commitments to come forward with 0.15 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance. It is disquieting that only a few countries have met the target. We urge others to fulfil their commitments in this regard.

We look forward to the outcome of the study the Secretary-General is to undertake with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and multilateral development institutions on the impact of structural adjustment programmes on economic and social development. The study will indicate ways and means to assist adjusting countries in creating conditions for economic growth, job creation, poverty eradication and social development. In this context, we recall the concept of development with a human face, and we are convinced that this concept continues to be important and valid for many of our countries.

At the international level, Bangladesh put forward proposals for follow-up of the outcome of the Social Summit. One of the proposals was the establishment of a high-level task force by the Secretary-General in consultation with the heads of the World Bank, IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO), with a view to making the entire multilateral system more responsive to the war against poverty. The task force would also aim at achieving proper coordination between the United Nations and those bodies and at introducing transparency in their work. It could also contribute to outlining procedures to make possible the active participation of developing countries in the decision-making processes of the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

The other proposal by Bangladesh was for the establishment of an independent commission. Bangladesh proposed that such a commission include eminent personalities under the leadership of the chairperson of the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission would submit recommendations on such crucial issues as cancellation of outstanding debts, providing a more human face to structural adjustment and matching the official development assistance targets set in 1981 at the Paris Conference on the Least Developed Countries. It would also look into the implementation of the Programme of Action in these countries.

In response to our *démarche*, the Secretary-General informed us that he had submitted to the executive heads of the specialized agencies a series of proposals for the establishment of inter-agency task forces aimed at providing strong coordinated support for country-level action, in the areas of the extension of basic social services, access by the poor to productive assets and employment and the creation of an enabling environment for poverty eradication and social development. In this context, he also acknowledged that he had personally been pursuing, with the heads of these institutions, the participation and close cooperation of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, and that he intended to keep the progress being made under close review through the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

In view of the least developed countries' increasing marginalization in world trade — a specific consequence of globalization and liberalization — Bangladesh drew the attention of the current Chairman of the Group of Seven to the concerns of the least developed countries. We felt that it would be expedient to do so, as most of our efforts at development, particularly social development, are seriously affected by the continued decrease in national income from trade. In response, the Chairman of the Group of Seven assured the Prime Minister of Bangladesh that the Group of Seven would work with the least developed countries in our effort to face our development challenges. It is a matter of great satisfaction and encouragement that, in their Lyon Summit economic communiqué, the Group of Seven expressed their firm commitment to further the integration of the least developed countries into the global economy

> "using the full range of policy instruments having an impact on development." (*A/51/208, annex II, para. 37*)

They have made a commitment to improve the access of the least developed countries to their markets. They have also encouraged other developed and developing countries to undertake similar measures.

I wish to refer briefly to the action taken by Bangladesh at the national level for the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Government has designated the Ministry of Planning as the focal point for the implementation of the Programme of Action, which includes the eradication of poverty as one of the key goals. The implementation components are being allocated to concerned ministries, divisions and agencies of the Government. The role of civil society in particular has been recognized and, in fact, some of its members are being invited to participate in inter-ministerial consultations so that we can receive their views and input with regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action.

At the regional level, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has launched a Poverty Alleviation Programme pursuant to the Dhaka Declaration on Poverty Eradication adopted in 1993. Under this programme, each country will, at the district level, form an evaluation committee — the Committee of Agents and Beneficiaries of Poverty Eradication at District Level — to take stock of and eventually coordinate all ongoing poverty-alleviation schemes. Of the six countries in the region that have joined the scheme so far, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have identified and initiated programmes in one model district.

About 50 agencies working in the model districts at the field level have started coordinating their action under the guidance of the Ministry of Planning. The scheme, which is being elaborated in line with the 15-year Participatory Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, calls for a coherent integrated approach to address hard-core poverty in the district at the grass-roots level.

I should like to welcome the important initiative to convene a micro-credit summit in Washington, D.C., in February 1997, aimed at helping 100 million families to come out of poverty by the year 2005. We urge all countries that are involved in poverty eradication at any level to participate in the summit. The provision of micro-credit, especially to women, was recognized at the Social Summit as being an important tool for poverty eradication. In this respect, Bangladesh is proud to share with the international community its experience with the Grameen Bank.

Finally, I should like to reiterate the fact that social development is a Charter obligation for all United Nations Members. The preamble to the Charter makes repeated reference to social development and better standards of life in larger freedom. It also includes a clear commitment to employing international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. The founding fathers of the United Nations, when drafting the Charter against the backdrop of the Second World War, did not fail to see the foundations of durable peace. Let us work together to realize the depth of their vision.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): My delegation first wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier today by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mongolia attaches particular importance to the consideration in plenary meeting of agenda item 45, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". In our view, it will help to sustain the momentum of the Summit — one of the largest meetings of world leaders, which was crowned by their collective commitment to fight poverty, create productive employment and strengthen social integration. We believe that consideration of this item will also promote an effective implementation of and an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, in tandem with the results of the other major United Nations-sponsored conferences, in the economic, social and related fields.

The holding of these conferences has, indeed, brought issues relating to human well-being to the top of the agenda of the international community. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, rightly underlined in his statement to the World Summit for Social Development, social problems that once could be confined within borders, now spread across the world. Once considered to be the exclusive responsibility of national Governments, they are now of global scale and require global attention.

Raising global awareness of the fact that social problems are a major source of tension — and fraught with the increasing danger of disrupting the social and political fabric, both within and between States, led to specific commitments being undertaken. Now is the time for those commitments to be translated into action at the national and international levels. Having studied the report of the Secretary-General, my delegation wishes to make the several observations related to actions taken at the international level to implement the outcome of the Social Summit.

With regard to institutional adjustments, the Commission for Social Development, as part of the three-tiered intergovernmental process, has been entrusted with the primary responsibility for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the Summit. The Commission has been strengthened through an increase in membership, the holding of annual meetings and the reaffirmation of its mandate. We welcome the adoption of its multi-year programme of work for 1997-2000, which will focus on the core issues of the Summit, as well as the introduction of such innovative working methods as forming panels of experts and holding dialogues with the participation of various entities of the United Nations system, civil society and governmental delegations.

In order for the Economic and Social Council to provide overall guidance and system-wide coordination in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, it is of signal importance to harmonize and coordinate the multi-year work programmes of all the relevant functional commissions and to avoid duplication of work. In this respect, my delegation looks forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report containing comprehensive information on the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of the functional commissions, expert groups and bodies to be submitted to the Council early next year.

The General Assembly's role lies mainly in policy formulation and overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. It is gratifying to note that the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Statistical Commission, as well as the regional commissions, have all been undertaking important initiatives respectively to support the implementation of the objectives set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

With regard to the mobilization of resources, the implementation of the Summit's decisions calls for a genuine political commitment on the part of the international community to increasing substantially resources for sustainable human development. We strongly believe that the mobilization of additional financial resources for social development can be made possible even — to use a frequently quoted, notoriously popular term — "within existing resources" through, *inter alia*, the introduction and wider use of such innovative schemes as alternative packages of socially responsible structural adjustment, the 20/20 concept and debt exchanges for social development. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the Economic and Social Council decision requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a report, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, on all aspects of new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities

Apart from exploring ways and means of mobilizing new and additional resources, the Mongolian delegation wishes to underscore the paramount importance of honouring the long-overdue commitment to the 0.7 per cent target by those donor countries that have not yet done so.

Finding an effective, development-oriented and durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries — by, *inter alia*, reducing and cancelling the debt — would undoubtedly help free resources for investment in social development. One might add that the realistic assessment of the underlying political and economic causes of the multiplying debt burden should be borne in mind when addressing this issue. Furthermore, my delegation would find useful the inclusion of a set of vulnerability factors in the criteria for determining the sustainability of a country's debt burden, an idea that is currently being developed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and to which the Secretary-General refers in chapter V (G) of his report.

Poverty means, among other things, lost opportunities — opportunities for adequate education and training and for equitable access to productive resources. For the overwhelming majority of developing nations, however, the problem of poverty is infinitely more severe, verging on desolation and despair. Solutions must be sought through cooperative action, both nationally and internationally. In this respect, we wish to emphasize the importance of setting time-bound goals and targets for the substantial reduction of overall poverty and the eradication of absolute poverty within a national context, as stipulated in the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

Mongolia supported the relevant General Assembly resolutions to observe the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty in 1996 and to proclaim the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. It would be only logical for national action to be complemented by a global strategy with time-specific goals to combat poverty. Along these lines, and in accordance with resolution S-1996/1 of the Commission for Social Development on strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty, we expect the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on actions to be taken by the United Nations system in preparation for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty to propose specific activities for each year of the Decade in order to facilitate the follow-up to and evaluation of such activities.

Turning to our activities at the national level, I should like to point out that immediately following the Summit, the National Preparatory Committee, headed by a Cabinet Minister responsible for social policy, was entrusted with a renewed mandate to ensure nationwide coordination of the Summit follow-up. Given the urgent need to elaborate and implement a well-targeted strategy for the eradication of poverty, which is a relatively new phenomenon in my country, in 1994 the Government of Mongolia adopted a Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). Many social problems have become acute and some new ones have emerged as Mongolia has entered the transition process from a centralized planning and state-subsidized social-security system to a market economy with its own social-safety arrangements.

A study of social conditions in Mongolia, conducted prior to the formulation of the PAP, revealed that poverty had increased dramatically since 1989 and, by early 1993, had reached alarming proportions. In terms of per capita income, 26 per cent of the population has been classified as poor, including 6 per cent who are in absolute poverty. Children with single parents or no parents, disabled people, elderly people and female-headed households with many children were found to be especially vulnerable. While poverty is high in urban and rural areas alike, the situation is particularly serious in the latter, which are the mainstay of the country's economy. Poverty was also found to have had a markedly negative effect on women, due partly to a rapid increase in the number of female-headed households. Indeed, 72 per cent of single heads of households, most of them female, live below the official poverty line, which simply implies a lack of access or limited access to basic social services, including food, sanitation, shelter, basic education and primary health care.

The overall aim of the PAP is to reduce the number of people in poverty from 26 per cent to 10 per cent by the year 2000. It is focusing on strengthening the institutional capacities of government, at both the central and local levels, with regard to policy management and poverty monitoring; promoting human resources development by providing better access to health and education opportunities; alleviating rural poverty; and developing and strengthening the basic social-safety net, among other issues. Special emphasis is placed on income-generation and the promotion of employment opportunities among small herders and the livestock sector in general. In an attempt to raise the income of the rural poor, the PAP is designed to restructure the rural economy through market development and upgrading basic infrastructures, targeting the poorest households for special credit and welfare schemes and promoting small-scale rural industries in agro-processing and non-farming activities.

The programme is decentralized, with most activities carried out at the local and grass-roots levels, directly by local governments or through non-governmental organizations and cooperatives. To ensure coordination of PAP activities at the national level, a Poverty Alleviation Committee, composed of representatives of sectoral ministries and relevant non-governmental organizations, has been set up. The Committee undertakes its activities in close synergy with the national focal point for the follow-up to the Summit.

As seen from the report of the Secretary-General, almost 100 focal points have been set up at national level to ensure the implementation of the basic objectives of the Social Summit. The establishment of the three inter-agency task forces on basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods and the enabling environment for economic and social development has proved to be instrumental in providing United Nations system-wide support and assistance, through Resident Coordinators, to national Governments in implementing the Summit goals.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's sincere hope that the ongoing deliberations on the implementation of the outcome of the Social Summit will help to generate renewed political will at the national and international levels to attain the objectives of sustainable human development.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the World Summit for Social Development, the international community articulated a new social contract at the global level, which brought renewed hope to men and women throughout the world. It marked a turning point in the history of humankind for human-centred development, with a firm commitment to giving social evolution the highest priority and to putting people at the forefront of global development.

During the Summit, the leaders of the world pledged to ensure universal well-being and social progress in the twenty-first century while outlining comprehensive policies and measures by which to meet those goals. Furthermore, to translate those promises into working realities, the General Assembly at its fiftieth session stressed, *inter alia*, the need for renewed, solid political will at the national and international levels to invest in people and their well-being so as to achieve the objectives of social development, and reiterated its call upon the world's Governments to fulfil their commitments made at the Summit.

As for national-level implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Korean Government earlier this year formulated the Framework for the National Welfare of the Twenty-first Century. This master plan is aimed at the achievement of a higher standard of living for all Koreans by guaranteeing a stable livelihood, expanding social and welfare services and improving the social insurance system. The preparation of medium-term strategies and programmes to realize this Framework is about to be finalized.

Furthermore, my Government places particular emphasis on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as the disabled, in the process of social development, in the firm conviction that a genuinely sound and prosperous society can be realized only when all people, irrespective of their physical or mental disadvantages, are able to pursue a life of happiness and dignity based on stability and equality.

It was in that context that the Republic of Korea was this year honoured to be the first recipient of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award in recognition of my country's noteworthy progress towards the fulfilment of the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his message of congratulations to the President of the Republic of Korea on that occasion. Both President Kim's acceptance speech and the Secretary-General's message have been distributed as official documents of the General Assembly.

Turning to the follow-up measures to the commitment to international cooperation made by my delegation during the Summit, we reaffirm our pledge vigorously to pursue all efforts towards that end. My Government has set out its objective not only to expand the scale of our official development assistance in a way that is commensurate with Korea's economic strength, but also to provide technical training for more than 30,000 people from developing countries by the year 2010. As a primary step in the implementation process, this year we increased our grant-type aid by 21 per cent and provided technical training for 1,100 people. Next year, we will increase grant-type aid by an additional 30 per cent and invite 1,200 people from developing countries for training.

The Secretary-General's report in document A/51/348 provides a good general overview of where exactly we stand in terms of implementing, in the broader context, the outcome of the Summit and, in a narrower context, resolution 50/161. My delegation believes that the progress documented in the report and, in particular, the setting-up of an appropriate framework within the United Nations system represent a positive initial step in the right direction. While we will actively continue with our own efforts towards the implementation of the outcome at both the national and international levels, my delegation wishes to underline four specific areas to which particular attention should be paid in the implementation process.

First, coherent policies and partnerships must be forged among the United Nations, the international community and donors if the goals of various international conferences, including the Social Summit, are to be realized. Secondly, the United Nations system must facilitate the implementation of conference outcomes at the country level through, *inter alia*, national capacity-building.

Thirdly, gender perspective must be effectively incorporated into the implementation of the Summit outcome. Fourthly, the more active involvement of civil society and other relevant actors — especially non-governmental organizations — must be ensured in the planning, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of social policies at the national level, as should their maximum participation in the United Nations process relating to the Summit.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that, in our pursuit of global progress, human-centred development should continue to be our foremost priority. It goes without saying that human-centered development depends upon three indispensable and closely interrelated factors: the protection of fundamental human rights, the democratic participation of all sectors of society and the promotion of social welfare and equality.

The Republic of Korea will continue to provide its share of contributions to the achievement of human-centred development and endeavour to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is a pleasure for me to address the Assembly with Ambassador Minoves-Triquell in the Chair.

Last year, we met here in the General Assembly to celebrate the success of the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen. Today, we are meeting to make a first assessment of the initiatives being taken to implement its agreements.

My comments are in line with the excellent statements we have just heard from the Group of 77 and the Rio Group, with which Chile fully agrees. In particular, I appreciated the kind words addressed to Chile by Mrs. Emilia Castro de Barish.

As other delegations have noted, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action constitute a new social contract at the global level. They represent the most progressive commitment in the history of the international community to making the war against poverty, unemployment and social exclusion the principal goal of the twenty-first century. The meeting of human needs, and especially the needs of the poorest, should become the yardstick for progress in our societies. This great international consensus is embodied in the decision to make social and ecologically sustainable development and growth with equity and gender equality the major challenge of our time.

To this end, we have undertaken 10 basic commitments. Today, our task is to make them a reality through concrete measures and activities at all levels. The Social Summit expressed the political will to take advantage of a window of opportunity that has opened in the world with the end of the cold war to let in fresh air and to overcome the age-old ideological intolerance and rivalries of power politics, which were impediments to true international solidarity and served only selfish self-interest.

The commitments of the Social Summit opened the door to a new era of cooperation among nations based on the security of the individual, above and beyond political, geographical and cultural barriers. We must ensure that, in implementing them, we do not falsify those high ideals, for the cold war is currently being replaced in the development sphere by a cold peace, a peace of insensitivity and indifference within and among nations.

A clear indication of this is the fact that developed societies have entered into a cycle of introspection and insecurity, in which their attitude towards the dispossessed within and without their own countries has become increasingly severe. Unfortunately, a similar attitude is emerging in the wealthy sectors of developing countries with respect to their own have-nots. It would seem that, in a globalized and competitive world, coldness of feeling has become the norm.

On this occasion, I should like to examine a topic that I view as one of particular importance, and I shall do so by raising 10 points. I am referring to the impact of the Social Summit on the operations of the United Nations and of the multilateral system in general. We can say with satisfaction that the Summit has made an important contribution to revitalizing and strengthening the social sector. The implementation of the Social Summit has become a dynamic stimulus for the reform and mobilization of the system as a whole. As I said, however, I wish to make 10 concrete points.

First, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the main United Nations organ of cooperation, has made the commitment to eradicate poverty as its first priority. As a result, the nearly 130 Resident Coordinators have been instructed to make themselves available to Governments to cooperate in the preparation and implementation of their anti-poverty policies. Mr. James Gustave Speth has stated that, in its commitment to the eradication of poverty, the UNDP must be what the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was for the World Summit for Children and what the United Nations Population Fund was for the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development. In other words, we have a clear operational United Nations presence at the national and local levels, and that is where the Summit will become a reality.

In this respect, the March 1996 decision of the UNDP Administrator to launch the Poverty Strategies Initiative, which to date includes 46 support programmes, was a timely and valuable action within the context of UNDP's support to more than 80 countries in its follow-up to the Summit commitments.

Secondly, we have taken a significant step in the historic problem of the lack of coordination — and even animosity — among various organizations of the United Nations family. The four task forces that have been set up on employment and sustainable livelihoods, basic social services for all, the enabling environment for economic and social development, and women are undoubtedly an important advance. After a few years of experience here at the United Nations, I would even qualify it as an amazing advance, since we have become rather used to the instinctive resistance with which the bureaucracies of the agencies, the programmes and the Secretariat greet the notion of working together without wondering who will be able to claim the credit. The early results of the task forces have been encouraging. If they are successful, they will have made an important contribution to the task of coordination, which is a responsibility of the Economic and Social Council.

Thirdly, the Commission for Social Development has been revitalized. As we all know, the Summit was necessary precisely because we had completely lost sight of the political implications of social questions. Early in this decade — and I say this with sorrow, because I value the Commission for Social Development — that body was languishing in peaceful obscurity within the system, discussing important matters but with no real influence on the overall workings of the United Nations. The concrete fact is that today, thanks to the Social Summit, the Commission has a new agenda and a new dynamic.

Fourthly, the Summit gave significant political support to the tripartite task of the International Labour Organization (ILO) by advocating a modern vision of the relationship between growth, social and economic development and job creation. That has put cooperation between Governments, businessmen and workers on the path towards a contemporary, innovative and creative attitude with regard to the links between society, security and employment. When so many Heads of State set employment as a national priority, ILO must accept the responsibility — and the challenge — of fulfilling that demand.

Similarly, this year the Summit had an impact on the most recent meeting of the Group of Seven at Lyon, France, where that Group, along with the Secretary-General, set world unemployment as a priority item. That is being followed up by the ILO-led inter-agency task force.

Fifthly, until very recently, the relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was marked by a certain distant reserve. Today, I think we can say that the links between them are closer, and I should like to say why: In part, it is due to a deliberate policy on the part of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to seek areas of agreement and cooperation with Michel Camdessus and James Wolfensohn. But in addition, and importantly, it is the result of the fact that the formulations and commitments of the Summit have facilitated a meeting of the minds with those institutions in developing joint and individual actions.

I wish to emphasize the recent efforts of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to adapt their development policies to a more social vision. Both institutions are reformulating their public expenditure policies for borrowing countries in order to incorporate social criteria in their recommendations, giving special emphasis to basic social services in health and education as an investment in human capital. These steps are important in terms of the Summit's commitment to introduce a social dimension in the adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions. However, bolder steps are still needed to be able to reach a broad conceptual consensus on development policies with the Bretton Woods institutions.

I remember having heard Michel Camdessus in a dialogue with the Economic and Social Council, at the beginning of this year or last year, when he said that the Social Summit was the first great document of the United Nations with which he fully agreed. Someone asked him how he could hold such an opinion when the Social Summit was strongly critical of the Fund's structural adjustment programmes. He replied that views on structural adjustments could differ and that, in any case, these had become more flexible; the important thing was that the Social Summit advocated that in order to have a sound social policy countries had to have a sound economy, and on that basis cooperation was possible.

In that framework, and given the structural nature of employment problems where macroeconomic policies play a determining role, IMF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are organizing a joint meeting of ministers of finance and labour as part of the follow-up to the Summit. The purpose of this is that, for the first time, macroeconomic policy, which determines many factors in the labour market, will also be reviewed by ministers of labour, who need to take other factors into account with a view to generating jobs.

Sixth, ties with the World Bank have become even closer. After uncertain beginnings, when James Wolfensohn first appeared in the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in 1995, the new President of this institution has emphasized cooperation with the United Nations. The Bank coordinates one of the follow-up task forces for the Summit. It has committed itself to the African initiative under United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) coordination and has given the war against poverty much greater momentum than it had before in the Bank. Recently, for the first time, and I will refer to this later on, decisions have been taken to begin to reduce the multilateral debt burden, despite the fact that, as the representative of the Group of 77 mentioned, some of the provisions need to be more flexible.

Seventh, we welcome the fact that in implementing the commitments of the Summit the Economic and Social Council has adopted measures to strengthen its economic and social areas so that it can appropriately fulfil its role to give general orientation and supervise the coordination of the entire system with respect to the outcome of the Summit. This was stated at the last session where the subject that was selected for coordination was the war against poverty.

Eighth, implementation of the Copenhagen programme calls for the mobilization of financial resources at the national and international levels, and we all know that we are today going through a stage of falling official development assistance. Within this regrettable situation, certain initiatives aimed at redressing the problem are discernable. Noteworthy on the conceptual level, for example, was the recent meeting of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which proposed a world association for development in order to achieve several objectives of the Social Summit, including the halving of the number of persons living in extreme poverty and universal primary education for all by the year 2015. As several other speakers have mentioned, the 20/20 concept is also making progress.

We should also mention the recent initiative to reduce the debt of the heavily indebted poor countries adopted at the last annual meeting of the World Bank and Monetary Fund to make use of new facilities which deal in particular with the multilateral debt. Those mechanisms can be made more flexible, but we wish to point out that one of the points which received more political pressure during the Social Summit was, precisely, in the first place, the cancelling of the bilateral debt by developed countries, such as Denmark and Austria. In the second place, something that up to the time of the Summit had not yet been possible, there was a recognition that the multilateral debt of heavily indebted countries is today the main problem faced by those countries and that they must be able to continue to borrow from multilateral agencies while at the same time receiving assistance with their previous debt. This has started to occur and the political impact of the Summit was unquestionably instrumental in this decision.

Ninth, I wish to refer to the contribution of civil society to the Summit. This was fundamental to its success, and at this follow-up stage it continues to be vital. So many things are happening that it is impossible to refer to them all but I have selected some of them as a symbol of all the initiatives that are taking place to implement the Summit. For example, in June this year, close to the first anniversary of the Summit, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which includes 194 affiliated trade union organizations throughout the world, took the follow-up to the Summit as one of its main themes at its 16th World Congress held in Brussels, and asked its national members to initiate work together with ILO with a view to implementing the Summit's commitments. I should also point out that the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with more than 100 member parliaments, has mobilized around the Summit's goals, and at its recent Inter-Parliamentary Council meeting in Beijing in September adopted a document on priority actions for the implementation by parliaments of the outcome of the Summit. If we think only of these two items, 194 trade union organizations asked by their central organ to promote the objectives of employment at the national level and more than 100 parliaments also resolved to take initiatives on the Summit, we realize how this process has been gaining ground in the political and main social sectors in our countries.

The same could be said of the International Council on Social Welfare, one of whose major initiatives had to do with a group of organizations which have constituted something termed "Social Watch", an interregional effort by grass-roots and research groups operating in many countries which are developing national case studies and also compiling information at the global level on the specific purposes of the Summit. As can be seen, there is an enormous list. I have merely picked a few examples to show how this is becoming part of society, apart from what we can do here in the United Nations system.

Tenth, in this statement I have emphasized the impact of the Summit on the United Nations system and civil society because I think this has been truly important. However, we cannot forget that it is at the national government level where we must first reflect our will to carry forth our commitments. We see with satisfaction that the Secretary-General refers to replies from over 100 Governments to his appeal to prepare goals and objectives in order to implement the commitments made at the Summit. The number of replies shows that the momentum of Copenhagen has not been lost. In many cases, the national preparatory committees for the Summit are still operational. There is no doubt, however, that it is at the national level where we must do more, especially in terms of the commitment to formulate or strengthen and implement, preferably this year, national plans to eradicate poverty. It is at the country level where we must establish the foundations for implementing the commitments, with the firm will of our Government, so that social development will become the new commitment of the social contract, as mentioned at the outset.

Regional governmental action is also important, and almost all regions have taken regional initiatives. I will mention only the one in which we were involved, which was the follow-up to the Summit in which we organized a hemispheric summit on the eradication of poverty and discrimination, held in Chile in January 1996.

As I approach the conclusion of my statement, I apologize for its length, but some of you know how passionate I am on this subject, so I am sure that you will allow me to take a little more time than most other delegations have been taking.

We must emphasize that the special session of the General Assembly set for the year 2000 will be of historic importance and will provide an opportunity for many Heads of State or Government to participate. Many Presidents have already told me, "prepare the session for the year 2000 well, because you are going to see me at the General Assembly. Don't just put it together at the last minute, because I will be there to see what we have done five years after the Summit for Social Development."

That is why it is essential to begin to prepare in advance that great gathering with the participation of all Member countries of the system, just as we prepared for the Summit with a broad Preparatory Committee in which everyone had a right to speak his mind. We must prepare similarly for the special session of the General Assembly, and in particular we must open it to all the countries whose Heads of State were in Copenhagen. It would be absurd if the countries whose Heads of State were in Copenhagen were not at the special session as well. I will not go into the details of this, but what I wish to convey is that we bear a major political responsibility in preparing that special session of the General Assembly very well. It will not be just any session of the General Assembly. It will be the result of this major process now under way.

Clearly, the 10 points I have mentioned were not made with the objective of concluding that all is well and that because of the realization of the Social Summit there is nothing to worry about. Obviously, that is not the case in many respects. What I wished to do was highlight the significant impact the Summit has had on the work of the institutions of the multilateral system, which I believe is extremely significant.

I wish to conclude by making three substantive comments. Firstly, the Social Summit will not have been a real success over time if it is not a success for Africa and the least developed countries. One of the results of the Social Summit of which I am proudest is the special commitment made to Africa. It is the first time in history that almost 120 Heads of State have affirmed that African and other least developed countries should be given political priority in the area of cooperation. I must say that I personally fought to achieve that commitment, even, at times, in the face of a lack of understanding by other developing countries. But we did this because Chile is deeply convinced that Africa requires and deserves international solidarity and a major flow of financial and material support. In their policies of cooperation, the United Nations and the developed countries must carry out effectively this commitment to Africa. The initiative for Africa is a good beginning, especially because for the first time — and this was of great interest to me now that Chile is on the Security Council — it links questions of security and development, a fundamental factor in the internal reality of every country. However, this initiative for Africa is not sufficient, and we most go far beyond it.

Secondly, the Summit will not be a success unless it also succeeds in making progress on the issue of gender equality and equity. It was also the first time in history that a gathering of Heads of State, not technical or ministerial meetings, raised the political standing of women's rights as a commitment of the international community.

In this respect, I would like to share an observation with the Assembly. The other day I was looking around this General Assembly Hall during the general debate in which our Ministers participated, and I noticed the overwhelming absence of women in delegations. Today it is somewhat different because, as we all know, there are always more women present to deal with social items than with other items. But during the general debate there were very few women in the Hall. Then this thought came to mind: would this not be the right time, when we have asked the Secretariat of the United Nations to gradually incorporate more women into managerial and other posts, for us to do the same ourselves — we, the Governments. I will leave the Assembly with this idea: we should agree, through a resolution, to appeal to our own Governments to incorporate into their delegations to the United Nations a higher percentage of women. We, the Governments, must be able to lead by example.

Finally, I mentioned at the beginning of my statement that we were living in a world of human indifference. However, we all know that there is a part of us that needs to act on the basis of values, ideals and dreams. We know that we are not heartless robots and that feelings and affection are an important part of our human identity. The Social Summit was a modern, contemporary, realistic and practical effort to take a human look at things and to overcome the moral indifference of our times. I invite all present to keep the spirit of Copenhagen alive in ourselves and in the United Nations.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, align themselves with this statement. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway have also aligned themselves with this statement.

The gathering of world leaders in Copenhagen in March last year marked a new consensus among the international community on the issue of development. It provided that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. It agreed to place renewed emphasis on people at the centre of development, to underline that the main purpose of development is to benefit the individual, and that development policies must be directed to achieving this aim. It agreed to give the goals of social development and human well-being

> "the highest priority both now and into the twenty-first century" *(A/CONF.166/9, p. 5, para. 1)*

and provided for a global and integrated approach to social development.

Over the last 50 years, there has been an enormous increase in global wealth and, in most countries, people expect to live longer, are better educated and have greater access to health care and social services. Many developing countries are participating more fully in the global economy and are playing an increasingly significant role in generating growth and expanding trade. Yet the gap between the richest and poorest countries continues to widen. Within many countries, the benefits of economic growth and wealth are unevenly distributed, with a disproportionate share going to the wealthiest. Nearly 1.3 billion people around the world live in absolute poverty, and their number is growing at the rate of almost 25 million a year. Over 120 million people are unemployed, many of them for long periods of time. Human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated, despite the solemn commitments entered into at the World Conference on Human Rights. Discrimination flourishes, whether the motive be gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or any other grounds.

The Heads of State and Government gathered at Copenhagen entered into a series of far-reaching commitments designed to address and overcome these challenges. They emphasized that development is not solely a question of economic growth. It encompasses also the legal and constitutional frameworks of States. It requires democratic and open governance in which government is accountable to the people and the individual is empowered and can participate fully in decision-making at all levels. It also requires social justice and the equitable distribution of wealth and income.

Development also demands full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and their enjoyment by all. It cannot be achieved unless women enjoy in law and practice full equality with men, and are able to participate fully in all aspects of society, and to obtain equal benefit from development. It cannot be achieved, either, if society discriminates against any of its members on any ground. On the contrary, the abilities, talents and experiences of all people, including the young and the old as well as people with disabilities, should be recognized, promoted and used in working towards a society for all.

The Copenhagen Declaration recognizes that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions for social development are the responsibility of each country. In so doing, Governments may take into account the particular conditions that each faces. Indeed, given the diversity of situations around the world, and the complexity and interdependence of the factors affecting social development, there is no single strategy which is universally applicable. However, the need to take account of differing conditions and to apply the strategy that is best suited to meet them cannot be used as a pretext to avoid or circumvent the commitments freely undertaken by Governments at the Social Summit and the international conferences.

The Programme of Action is very clear in this regard. It proclaims that the ultimate goal of social development is to improve and enhance the quality of life of all people. It sets out numerous actions that must be undertaken to this end. Among others, the achievement of this aim requires democratic institutions, increased and equal opportunities, the rule of law, the promotion of respect for cultural diversity and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. All these commitments, and the others adopted, must be implemented in their entirety. Governments cannot excuse a failure to fulfil one aspect by pleading the inability to achieve another. They cannot adduce lack of development as a reason for denying the full equality of women, or for denying the rights of minorities or indigenous people. Equally, they cannot point to achievements in one area as a mitigating reason for neglecting another. A democratic system, respect for civil and political rights, and free and fair elections do not permit Governments to ignore social and economic deprivation and exclusion from society.

The eradication of poverty is the most daunting social challenge facing national Governments and the international community today, when more than one person in five lives in absolute poverty, and many more have unacceptably low standards of living. Poverty is a complex and multidimensional problem which has its roots in structural, institutional and developmental causes at both the national and international levels. It is often accompanied by lack of participation in civil and political life. The economic and social problems faced by people living in poverty are exacerbated by their exclusion from decision-making and the fact that their views are frequently ignored by those in positions of authority.

Achieving the goal of the eradication of poverty requires that Government and society address all aspects of the problem. It may be necessary to alter the economic and administrative systems so that everyone can have access to resources and opportunities. Ensuring that all can benefit from sustainable economic growth may require far-reaching changes in the way wealth and income are distributed. Measures must be taken to ensure the democratic participation of people living in poverty, including participation in the design and implementation of anti-poverty programmes. It is also necessary to provide social protection programmes for those who cannot support themselves. A gender perspective must be integrated fully into all aspects of the design and execution of strategies and programmes to combat poverty. Indeed, since the majority of those living in poverty are women, any anti-poverty programme that fails to mainstream a gender perspective will fail in its objectives.

This was what we agreed at Copenhagen. It is time to put these commitments into effect. Governments agreed to formulate or strengthen, preferably by 1996, and implement national poverty eradication plans to address the structural causes of poverty. These national plans should establish strategies and goals for the substantial reduction of overall poverty and the eradication of absolute poverty. Each country should also develop a precise definition and assessment of absolute poverty. Many Governments, including Governments within the European Union, are engaged in activities aimed at developing these national anti-poverty strategies as well as supporting developing countries in the design and implementation of these strategies. It is essential that Governments fully involve civil society in the development and implementation of these strategies. This participation should extend to all those with an interest in the outcome, and particularly representatives of people living in poverty, as well as women, people with disabilities, youth and older persons.

The support of national poverty eradication plans is, in our view, the key task for the United Nations system and should be implemented in an effective, coordinated and action-oriented manner. We appreciated the discussion of the issue at the last session of the Economic and Social Council, and we believe that the agreed conclusions constitute solid ground for action by the Commission for Social Development and the United Nations system as a whole. The political commitment of the system needs to be complemented by an appropriate operational framework, particularly at country level. Poverty eradication plans should be incorporated fully into the various United Nations mechanisms to support Governments in their efforts to achieve sustainable social and economic development. For its part, the United Nations system, through the resident coordinators, should provide support to Governments, where requested, in the planning, formulation, implementation and monitoring of these plans and programmes.

The European Union believes that the support of the international community at both the bilateral and multilateral levels is essential in helping to create an environment in which Governments take the lead in assessing poverty situations and in developing national poverty eradication strategies and programmes, and we will play our part in such efforts. The effective mobilization of financial resources for poverty eradication and a more effective orientation of development cooperation and assistance to this goal need to be fully explored, bearing in mind our commitment to the 0.7 per cent of gross national product as the target for official development assistance. We also note the work that interested countries have undertaken in developing the 20/20 concept, notably at meetings that led to the adoption of the Oslo consensus. We look forward to the follow-up meeting next year, which will review and assess progress in implementing this initiative.

The Programme of Action identified full and adequately remunerated employment as an effective method of combating poverty and promoting social integration. The goal of full employment requires that the State, the social partners and all the other members of civil society at all levels cooperate to create conditions that enable everyone to participate in and benefit from productive work. It is essential to place the creation of employment at the centre of national strategies and policies. Particular attention should be paid to the enhancement of employment and the need for quality jobs, with full respect for the rights of workers as defined in relevant international instruments, notably those agreed in the framework of the International Labour Organization.

Particular efforts are required to ensure gender equality, equal opportunity and non-discrimination. Special priority must be given to the problems of structural, long-term unemployment and underemployment. Priority should also be given to ensuring productive employment for youth, women, persons with disabilities, and disadvantaged groups and individuals. Education and training programmes assume a particular importance in providing individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications to avail themselves of opportunities for full and productive employment.

Next year, the Commission for Social Development will examine the theme of "Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods". We look forward to a focused and pragmatic discussion of the various issues involved. This will require thorough preparation by the Secretariat, and the active participation of Governments, the social partners and those elements of the United Nations system with particular responsibilities in this area. The input and participation of the International Labour Organization in this discussion will be particularly valuable.

Unemployment within the European Union remains a matter of great concern. While the conditions for economic recovery in Europe are in place, the rate of unemployment remains unacceptably high, and the fight for employment remains the top priority of the European Union and its member States. The European Council, meeting in Florence last June, had a detailed discussion of growth and employment, and stressed that new impetus was to be given to job creation strategies and to their implementation. Sustainable employment creation requires an approach which involves macro-economic stability, structural reform in the functioning of labour, product and services markets, and a wide range of labour-market policies designed to help the labour categories particularly hit by unemployment. These include the long-term unemployed and, in most countries, women, young people and the unskilled. The issue of employment is an important question in the context of the intergovernmental conference at present under way to review the operation of the treaties and to prepare reforms of the Union's institutions.

The aim of social integration is to create a "society for all, in which every individual can participate fully". Society must be firmly rooted in the rule of law, democratic participation, gender equality, the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all, social justice, tolerance, respect for ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and meeting the requirements of groups with specific needs, such as young and older people, as well as people with disabilities. Achieving this requires transparent and accountable public institutions that are accessible to people on an equal basis and are responsive to their needs. It requires action by Governments to enshrine in law the rights of the individual, and to ensure that effective action is taken in cases where these are not respected. Strengthened participation and involvement of civil society in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of societies is also critical.

The European Union is composed of multicultural and multi-ethnic societies. We are concerned about many serious incidents of racial or ethnic discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racially motivated violence, which continue to occur despite the efforts of Governments and law enforcement authorities to prevent them and to bring their perpetrators to justice. The European Union will continue to combat vigorously these incidents and all other forms of discrimination. In addition to actions undertaken at national level, we have launched a Union-wide effort to combat these manifestations. At its meeting in Florence in June, the European Council reaffirmed the Union's determination to combat racism and xenophobia with the utmost resolve, and approved the principle underlying the establishment of a European monitoring centre. The Union is currently taking steps to establish the centre and is considering the links between it and the Council of Europe. The Council of Ministers is also considering other measures relating to the laws and the judicial and administrative procedures of member States in this field.

1997 has been proclaimed the "European Year against Racism". The aim is to highlight the threat posed by racism to human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to the economic and social cohesion of the Union. These objectives will be realized in close partnership with all elements of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and those affected by racism.

The World Summit on Social Developr[illegible]nabled the international community to adopt a [illegible]icular perspective in relation to development. But it did not take place in isolation. It built upon the outcomes of earlier conferences, notably those of Rio de Janeiro, Vienna and Cairo. In turn the commitments entered into in Copenhagen have been expanded further at Beijing, and will continue to be built upon in future years as the international community continues its efforts to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" *(A/CONF.166/9, p. 39, para. 17 (a))*. As a result, it is important that Governments and the United Nations system implement these outcomes, and monitor their implementation, in an integrated manner. We fully share the views expressed by Under-Secretary-General Desai when he addressed the Third Committee on Monday that the credibility of the policy-of-development process requires that there be a shift of focus to implementation, and that the analytical, normative and operational work of the United Nations should increasingly be guided by the objectives of integration and mainstreaming.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a three-tiered mechanism to ensure that the follow-up to the Social Summit should take place in such an integrated manner. It provided that the General Assembly should act as the principal policy-making organ on manners relating to the follow-up of the Summit. This role would be ensured most effectively if this question were to be considered in those main committees which have the primary responsibility for economic and social issues, as is the case of the follow-up to other major conferences. The experience of this year, where we have had essentially the same debate in plenary and in the Third Committee, should not be repeated. We are of the view that our agenda and programme of work for future years should take account of these concerns.

Important decisions were taken at this year's session of the Economic and Social Council on coordination of the work of its functional commissions in relation to poverty eradication, one of the priority themes of the Summit. We trust that in future years, this coordinated approach will extend to other matters that were discussed at Copenhagen and other major United Nations conferences.

The Economic and Social Council also adopted a framework for the functioning of the Commission for Social Development to enable it to fulfil its central role as the functional commission with the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the Summit. It is important that the Commission receive the support of Governments in carrying out this task. In this regard, it is important to ensure the participation of high-level representatives from the field of social development in its work.

Indeed, the need for such high-level involvement in the follow-up and implementation of the Social Summit at both national and international level is essential if we are to maintain the necessary political will to turn the commitments of Copenhagen into reality.

Mr. Owada (Japan): It is now almost one and a half years since the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Summit was the culmination of a series of international conferences on social issues that the international community has to tackle in the contemporary world on a priority basis. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Summit, containing an important set of commitments and recommendations to be implemented, became a historic landmark that established the international consensus on the goals to be pursued and achieved in the area of social development for the coming decades.

With the demise of the cold war and the evolution of an environment characterized by ever-increasing globalization and economic interdependence, the international community faces a new opportunity as well as a new challenge for tackling the problem of development in a new light. Some progress has been made in the right direction in this regard, but much remains to be done. In this context, the Copenhagen Summit should be looked at as a new attempt to address this most important problem of development from the angle of its social components.

One of the most important achievements of the Copenhagen Summit was the agreement to place people at the centre of the development process. As noted in its Programme of Action,

> "economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people." *(A/CONF.166/9, p. 5, para. 6)*

The Government of Japan believes that in order to realize this, a new development strategy, to be pursued along this line, is very much needed, based on this concept of people-centred development. We in Japan believe that such genuine development can only be achieved on the basis of a comprehensive approach to development which would involve activities ranging over the economic and social fields, such as financial resource mobilization through official development assistance, investment and trade, and human resource mobilization through social integration of people by means of ensuring basic education, primary health care and empowerment of all groups of people in society.

In any society, sound economic growth can be attained only in conjunction with sound progress in social development. With that clear recognition in mind, we have to tackle the three basic issues on which the Summit chose to focus its attention — the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and social integration — as challenges to be tackled in unison on our way to the attainment of development based on social justice. The Declaration adopted by Heads of State or Government at the Summit recognizes that today more than 1 billion people are living in absolute poverty, over 120 million people are unemployed and a great number of citizens are excluded from the social and political process. Japan maintains the view that these three basic issues are closely interrelated. If we cannot succeed in coping effectively with one issue, it will adversely affect the solution of the other two, with the result that none of them will be solved. Each country needs to formulate and implement comprehensive and effective policies based on the clear recognition of this interrelationship.

An essential step towards moving in that direction is to ensure the participation of people, Governments and other actors of civil society in carrying out the commitments agreed upon in the Programme of Action on the basis of this integrated approach. This would include setting up such targets as universal access to basic education, a reduction in the infant mortality rate, a reduction in malnutrition among children and the attainment by all people of a higher level of health. Efforts to achieve these targets by the countries in the process of development need to be complemented by well-coordinated assistance from developed countries, international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. It is with a keen awareness of this point that Japan has undertaken its initiative for promoting a new strategy for development and has, for its part, been implementing such an integrated approach in its development cooperation policy.

At this juncture in our consideration of the issues involved in social development, I wish to emphasize the importance of one of the three basic themes of the Summit: social integration. The achievement of social integration is not only important from the viewpoint that each citizen should be given the opportunity to make the most of his or her potential; it is also important from the viewpoint that the participation of citizens, who have an indispensable role to play in following up this Summit, is essential to achieving the goal of development.

The commitments and recommendations agreed upon at Copenhagen, contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action, will have to be implemented on the international level as well as on the national level. It is in this context that the proposal to achieve and maintain the 20/20 initiative has its significance. Thus, Japan allocated 23.2 per cent of its bilateral assistance in 1994 to projects related to social infrastructure such as education, public health, sanitation and population, while 33.3 per cent went to meet basic human needs, including projects in the social and agricultural sectors and the area of emergency relief. The share of the social sector in Japanese official development assistance has grown steadily in recent years, and Japan intends to further intensify its cooperation in this area.

The promotion of social integration requires active participation by local communities in the development process and activities at the grass-roots level. As part of its efforts in these areas, Japan is offering assistance to activities of non-governmental organizations and local governments. Furthermore, in order to encourage the integration into society of disadvantaged people, Japan is actively engaged in providing assistance to developing countries in support of persons with disabilities, the elderly and minorities. Japan is also extending cooperation for the empowerment of women and for child health care. My delegation urges other Governments to work in the same direction to meet our promise at the international level.

As regards the organizational side of our work for the implementation of what was agreed upon at Copenhagen, my delegation notes with satisfaction that the General Assembly last year began its consideration of ways and means for the United Nations system to follow up the Copenhagen Summit. Let me offer the views of my delegation on how these follow-up activities should be carried out at the international level, primarily within the United Nations system, and on what part of this process we must place our primary emphasis.

My delegation is gratified to see that the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development, a three-tiered mechanism for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, have begun their work in their respective roles, in accordance with the mandates conferred on them by General Assembly resolution 50/161. As regards the role of the Commission for Social Development, Japan welcomes the adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/7 at the Council's substantive session this year. The Commission, as part of its existing mandate, is to assist the Council in monitoring, reviewing and appraising the progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The resolution also establishes further substantive agenda items for the Commission, as well as its programme of work and the methods to be employed in carrying it out. My delegation is fully convinced that all these new procedural arrangements will enhance the capacity of the Commission and revitalize its functions as the key intergovernmental institution engaged in monitoring, promoting and guiding the follow-up to the Social Summit at the global level.

The role of the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up activities of the Social Summit must be to provide overall guidance, maintain system-wide coordination and review the progress made towards implementing the outcome of the Summit. In carrying out this task, it is imperative that the whole structure of the United Nations, including the roles and functions of the Council and the organization of the Secretariat in the economic and social fields, should be reviewed and reformed with a view to meeting the new requirements and expectations of contemporary international society.

As for the role of the General Assembly in this area, the Assembly, as the highest decision-making organ within the United Nations, should strengthen its policy-making role on social development in the intergovernmental process and provide policy guidance to all relevant organs and bodies.

Other agencies and institutions in the United Nations system, working in the field of social development, should also be brought into this more integrated scheme of cooperation. In this connection, the delegation of Japan notes with satisfaction that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has responded to the request of the General Assembly in a timely manner, particularly by reorienting its programming activities to target poverty eradication as its paramount concern.

The active participation of the Bretton Woods institutions in the follow-up process is likewise essential. It is hoped that these institutions will pay much attention to the importance of social factors in the overall strategy for development and strengthen their efforts in that area. Intensified cooperation on their part with the United Nations system at the global, regional and national levels in the area of economic and social development would be most desirable to ensure coherent development efforts to produce fruitful results.

In order to effect such an integrated scheme of cooperation along the lines I have just outlined, my delegation believes that the institution of inter-agency task forces, as established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, can be a major channel through which participating agencies can engage in constructive dialogue for the purpose of ensuring close cooperation in effectively implementing the Programme of Action. Intensified efforts for coordination and cooperation are very much desired.

In the year 2000, the United Nations is scheduled to conduct an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Social Summit. Towards that goal, the United Nations system, other international organizations, Governments and the relevant actors in civil society must work together to move forward in a spirit of cooperation and partnership. Japan, for its part, will be actively engaged in this process by promoting the new strategy for development, of which the task assigned to us in the Programme of Action for social development should form an integral part.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): A short while ago, the representative of the European Union spoke on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, including Slovenia. The purpose of my statement is to add a few additional points to the statement made on behalf of our delegation.

The World Summit for Social Development was an important conference, and its outcome represents one of the most far-reaching programmes ever adopted within the framework of the United Nations. Let me recall in this context that Ambassador Somavía of Chile, in his statement earlier this morning, spoke about the great international consensus formulated at Copenhagen. The Summit articulated, in a systematic and coherent manner, a set of basic and very demanding commitments and an ambitious Programme which has the potential to be a major contribution to the shaping of world economic and social policies in the decades to come.

It is gratifying to see that the United Nations can be the international forum that enables the formulation and adoption, by the highest representatives of States, of such ambitious commitments as the commitment to eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country, or the pursuit of the objective of full employment and the protection of social integration based on the enhancement and protection of human rights for all. These are ambitious commitments and the achievement of practical results will require time. It is important to keep in mind the long-term nature of this vision and the Programme adopted at Copenhagen. However, the effort to give concrete form to commitments adopted at the Summit must be continuous and result-oriented. The implementation process will preserve its credibility only if the first results are seen soon and if the continuity of a result-oriented approach is preserved.

Two basic conditions have to be met in order to make the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development successful. The first is essentially ethical, in our opinion, while the second is practical and essentially political. The first condition relates to the actual readiness of decision-makers, both at the national and the international levels, to take their commitments seriously. The second requires careful policy-making and appropriate institutional support. These two conditions are closely interrelated: without an ethical component, there is very little hope for genuine success in policy-making, while without effective policy-making even a genuine ethical commitment remains empty.

Slovenia takes the ethical aspect of implementing the commitments of the world social Summit very seriously. Our experience, like that of many other States, is that in practical reality difficult policy choices need to be made. Thus, in situations when choices are required, the commitments adopted at the world social Summit must not be neglected. Moreover, it is precisely in situations requiring difficult choices that the objectives, commitments and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen can be given specific meaning, despite various obstacles which limit the leeway of decision makers.

The objectives and commitments of the world social Summit can be inconvenient in practice, or can conflict with other priorities at the local, regional and international levels. It is therefore necessary that special efforts be made in implementation, in particular in the first years, in order to prove the viability of the outcome of the Summit.

The second basic condition relates to policy-making. Here, both persistence and imagination are required from policy makers. For Governments, the question of how to involve the increasingly important non-State actors and civil society in a meaningful way, and without creating a relationship of subordination, poses one of the major challenges for the implementation of the outcome of the world social Summit.

The most important part of policy-making has to take place at the local and national levels. United Nations Member States bear the primary responsibility for their policies in the field of social development and for the results of such policies. Activities at the international level are a supplement — sometimes an essential one — to the activities of Governments at the national level.

As we read the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the world social Summit (A/51/348) in the light of these basic ethical and policy requirements, we can discern important elements of progress. Let me mention, by way of illustration, only two among them. I shall select two that are not necessarily always the focus of our attention.

It is clear that any serious effort for measuring actual progress in the implementation of the outcome of the world social Summit requires appropriate methodology. In particular, it requires a set of adequate and internationally-accepted statistical indicators to measure actual progress and agreed-upon methodology to use them. It is therefore very important that — as we learn from the report of the Secretary-General — serious initiatives have already been taken in this domain.

We learn in the report about the statistical project launched by the Government of Denmark, the host country of the world social Summit. We entirely agree with the Government of Denmark that:

> "better statistics are essential for a meaningful debate on the solutions to social problems". *(A/51/348, para. 17)*

This approach demonstrates the high level of commitment of the Government of the Summit's host country to making a major and very meaningful contribution to the implementation of the programmes adopted at Copenhagen. What is required at the level of the United Nations is not only recognition but also effective support for the Government of Denmark for the success of its statistical project.

In this context, we find it encouraging that a related development has taken place in the United Nations Statistical Commission. In paragraph 42 of the report of the Secretary- General, we read that the Commission has already established an Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences to draw up a work programme reflecting the major action areas identified by the Summit and indicators where international statistical work in the social field should be concentrated. We learn from the same paragraph that the Expert Group has already reached agreement — and I emphasize, has already reached agreement — on a core list of 15 specific indicators comprising a minimum special data set to be collected by each country. These indicators were recommended to the Commission for its endorsement, and we hope that the Commission will agree on them soon.

These developments in the field of statistics should be encouraged and should converge. There is a need for both methodological improvement and stronger international agreement on indicators, and I would especially emphasize the need for stronger international agreement on the indicators to be used to measure social progress, in the future, in a coherent and universally applicable manner. The level of knowledge about the actual situation, the actual progress or regression, must be improved in order to enable the decision-making bodies of the United Nations and of Governments to promote competent and successful policy-making.

The critical importance of such a seemingly technical aspect as statistics for successful policy-making reminds us that we need to understand more completely the social phenomena we are dealing with in the context of the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit in order to develop appropriate policies. The task of eradicating poverty requires a better understanding of the structural causes of poverty, some of which are specific to a given society while others may result from global factors.

The acceptance of poverty as a social reality has in the past created a specific cultural effect which continues to persist, an effect that some commentators call the culture of poverty, which is based on the belief that the problem is too large and that the situation cannot really be changed. That belief is still strong worldwide. The commitment to eradicate poverty adopted at Copenhagen is an important conceptual challenge to that belief. However, that challenge is only a beginning which may or may not lead to effective policy.

We are encouraged to see that in the context of preparations for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, which will start in 1997, a conceptually sound policy approach is emerging. It insists on income-generating activities by the affected people themselves and on support through the delivery of basic social services and social safety nets.

However, the conceptual soundness of the emerging United Nations approach to the eradication of poverty has to be tested in the context of actual policies and has to yield measurable results in terms of attaining the targets set at Copenhagen, narrowing the income gap within societies and between States and measurably empowering the people. In this context it is particularly important to put the gender issue at the centre of analysis of the problems to be addressed and of the policy-making. The experience gained in a variety of social settings worldwide has confirmed the primary importance of the empowerment of women and the primary need to develop appropriate policy approaches to address this issue.

In this way, the agenda of implementing the central commitment adopted at Copenhagen — the commitment to eradicate poverty — becomes very diverse and demanding; it is an agenda that will require a great deal of energy and persistence in its implementation.

Let me say in conclusion that it is important that the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development be followed closely and continuously by the General Assembly. We would therefore favour regular reports by the Secretary-General and regular consideration of this item by the General Assembly.

Agenda item 119 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/51/366/Add.4)

The Acting President: Before calling the next speaker, I should like to inform the Assembly that since the issuance of the provisional version of document A/51/366/Add.4, I have been informed that Chad has also made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This information will be incorporated into the final version of addendum 4.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.